FIENDISH

A Collection Of Horror & Cult Genre Writings



IN THIS ISSUE:

interviews with

ADRAIN BAEZ

of

Molly Walsh

Video Productions

PHILIP PERRON

of Halloween Boutique

Psychotronic Reviews

PLUS

REVIEWS

ESSAYS

MEMORIES

& other writings

ONE SHOT AUGUST 2017

The Innards of The Fiendish

a.k.a. "What's Inside This Issue!!"

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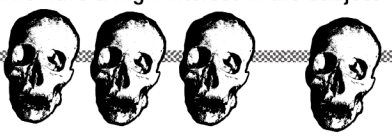
This one-shot issue of FIENDISH was assembled, edited and laid out by Dave K. aka A Fiend On Film in June/July of 2017. Thanks to all who submitted pieces for it!

"What is this FIENDISH thing you speak of?" a.k.a. being dragged back into the fanzine world....

by Dave K/A FIEND ON FILM

In 2016, I organized a small web event which turned into a printed 'zine event called Hara-Kiri: Extreme Asian Films. It was pretty well received, with print copies being given out on two occasions and close to 1,000 downloads for the PDF version. This year, I came up with an idea, fused together from other random thoughts I had to put out a one shot fanzine for a convention I was going to, Tampa Bay Screams. What you hold in your hands is the result. I asked a large group of folks to help out, either by writing a new review, article, etc... or donate an already written piece that wasn't on paper pertaining to Horror & Cult films. Quite a few answered the call. All things considered this 'zine project came together faster than any I have done before and I am thankful people have enough faith in me to get it done (as I tend to be flaky on things, some do get finished!). So below is a list of folks who contributed this time out, look to their pages for more info on their websites, twitter handles... They are all interesting individuals who have a high interest in the subject matter discussed within these pages. -DK

The fiends...



(in no particular order) Chris Gerno, Adrian Baez, Danni Winn, Kim McDonald, Michael E, Wilson, Chris Woods, James Higgins, Phillip Perron, John Leavengood, Greg Baty, Kristi Peterson Schoonover, Jonny Numb, Bill Van Ryn, Bill Meeker, Jesse Midnitekrawlr, Jason Fetters, Kara Grimoire, Joey Lugosi, Philip Wilcox, Mando Ayala, Rachel Flores Lara & Anthony Picerno



FIENDISH thanks to...

James Dickie Stewart, Dr. Jose/Camera Viscera, Aaron & Ricki/Cavity Colors, Crash Palace Productions, The Last Knock Podcast, The Crew at Plato's Cave Podcast (Alex, Emma, Cerise, Thomas & Faith), Dark Discussions Podcast, Bryan Sliverbax, Angela Jane, Marko Suuronen, Jack Jensen, Helene Hindberg, Chris Garofalo/Quiltface, Dark Comedy Productions, Sean Donohue/Gatorblade, Krystal Pixie Adams, Mike/Grindhouse Video, Stephen Biro/Unearthed Films, Marcus Koch and so many others who are not forgotten but continue to inspire me (Dave K.) everyday...

CHRIS GENRO'S FILM REVIEWS

The Transfiguration (2017)

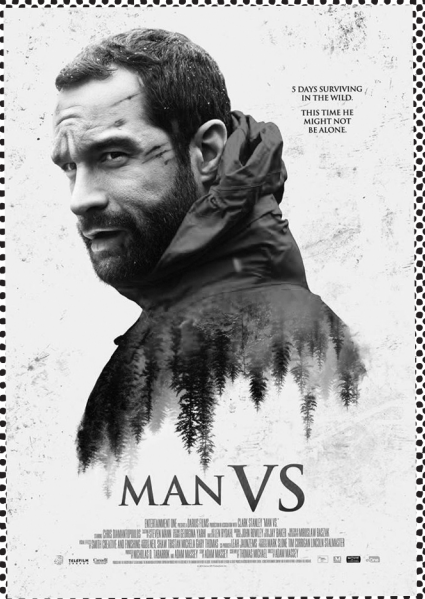


I'm having a really love/hate relationship with this film right now. On one hand it really moved me with its character relationships and commentary on loneliness and alienation. But on the other hand its painfully slow in areas and the constant name dropping of "real" vampire films kept pulling me out of the story.

The performances by our two leads Milo (Eric Ruffin) and Sophie (Chloe Levine) are absolutely fantastic and I was immediately taken in by their awkwardness and dynamic as they play off each other perfectly. You want them to find a way to make things work and be happy together.

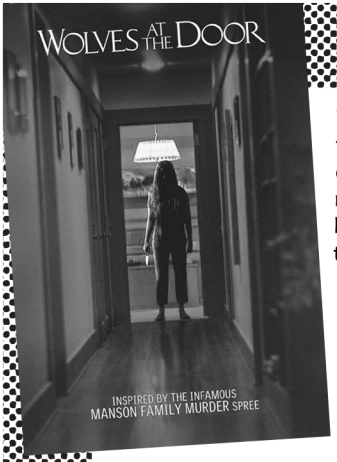
If I was to think of films this reminds me of it would have to be Let The Right One In (2008) mixed with Martin (1978) and set in a poor neighborhood in New York. I really think this will appeal to film fans who appreciate drama with a dose of horror as this film very much focuses on character building and relationships rather than violence and gore. That's not to say the film doesn't have its disturbing moments but it takes some time to get going.

So overall a really enjoyable experience that's bought down a bit by some pacing issues and the need to be a little to in your face with its inspirations. 4/5 stars.



Man Vs. (2017)

Wow this is a pretty terrible film in multiple ways. Practically nothing happens for roughly 50mins or so which I guess is supposed to be the film building suspense. When something exciting does happen you are presented with probably one of the worst creature designs I've ever seen and CGI that looks like its pulled right out of the 90s. If it wasn't for the performance by Chris Diamantopoulos this film would be a total write off. Just avoid this. 1.5/5 stars.

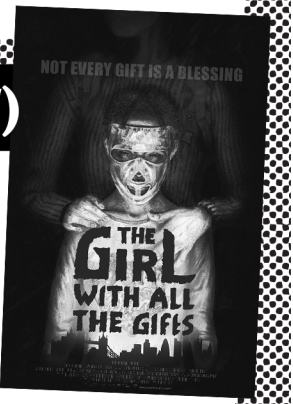


Wolves At The Door (2017)

This film is getting a lot of hate from critics and horror fans just for the fact its based on the real life Tate Murders perpetrated by followers of Charles Manson. This is not new to the genre as there have been dozen of films based on true crimes. So for me going in I decided to view this film solely as a work of fiction.

I actually enjoyed this for the most part as our main cast of characters are likable and the acting is quite good. The film is also shot beautifully and I liked the use of music from the period. I will admit the plot is threadbare at best and in the end this comes off as a low rent ripoff of Bryan Bertino's The Strangers from 2008.

The big issue I had with the film though is with the epilogue when actual newsreel footage is shown of the victims and killers including Manson himself. If you want to be inspired by a true crime that's fine but you can't have it both ways. So while there is some good stuff here, it's ultimately wasted on a film that can't decide what it wants to be. 3/5 stars.

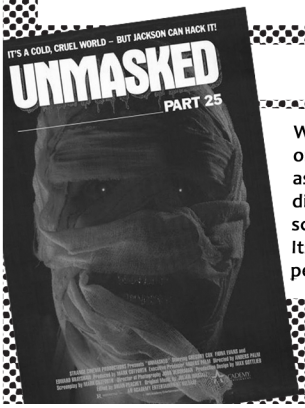


The Girl With All The Gifts (2017)

This is the film the horror community has been raving about? I have to say I'm somewhat disappointed. Full disclosure zombie films have never been a favorite of mine but I found this film really dragged in the middle to the point I almost gave up on it.

On the positive side the opening 45mins or so is actually really good and it has a really poignant ending. It's beautifully shot and I loved the musical score that creates a very dreamlike atmosphere. The performances all around are outstanding especially by Paddy Considine who really steals the film.

I really wanted to like this film more especially with all the buzz this was getting but for me this is good but not amazing. 3.5/5 stars.



Unmasked: Part 25 (1989)

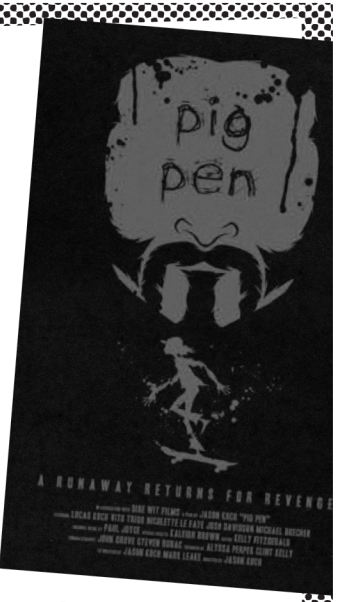
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What an absolutely bizarre take on the slasher film by turning it into not only a comedy but a Shakespearean tragedy. It doesn't totally work for me as it really drags in the middle when it gets into the romantic angle and the discussions the killer has with his father. But what does work is the opening scene and final act stalk and slash thanks to some really great gore effects. Its to bad this film is trapped on VHS as it really needs to be seen by more people. 3.5/5 stars

CHRIS GENRO'S FILM REVIEWS

https://www.facebook.com/cgsfilmreview

Pig Pen (2017)



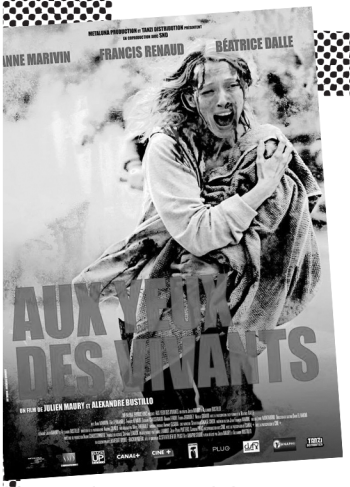
Wow this film was on its way to being one of my favorites of the year so far but a clunky final act and a mean spirited ending kind of brought it down.

The performances here from the entire cast is actually really good. We have a supporting cast of quirky and eccentric characters that really help this film standout from other indie horror offerings. This especially is important as as our main character who takes us through our journey is a boy of few words.

The film is mainly a drama for the majority of its running time so we have a slow build to our final act when things get really dark and ultra violent. This is where the practical effects kick in and they are just excellent and rival some bigger budget hollywood films.

Where the films stumbles a bit is in it's overuse of extended monologues which slows things down instead of working to keep up the suspense and intensity. Also I found the final scene of the film just didn't work for where the story was headed and felt it was done just to have a punchline. Its a very serious and dark film and ending things on a lame gag just felt lazy.

So while the film has some issues overall it had me glued to the screen for the majority of its run time and I will most definitely give it a second watch before the end oft he year. 4/5 stars.



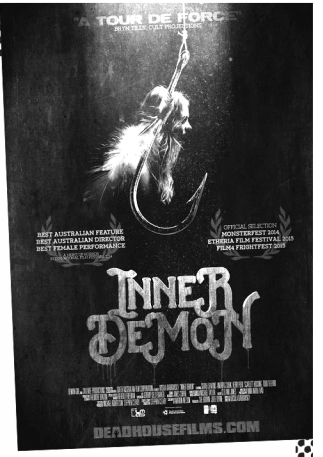
Among the Living (2017)

Well this for me was a major disappointment. Things start off pretty violently as we are introduced to our antagonists. Cut to the next 45mins which feel like a French version of an Amblin film as we follow 3 young boys going around and causing mischief including burning down an old farmers barn. Nice way to get me to not like them immediately. Things take a turn when they come upon a woman bound and gagged in the trunk of a car. From this point on we enter stalk and slash territory and the film definitely picks up for the final act.

Whats so strange about the film is the tone is just all over the place. Having 3 kids as your main protagonists just limits you in regards to putting them in danger and what you can ultimately do to them. Our killer while having a cool design just has the typical slasher MO and for a film where the body count is high we really don't see that many kills or much violence.

So I'm really mixed on this as it really has some great ideas but the execution was pretty lacking. 3/5 stars.

Inner Demon (2017)



You can tell this is a lower budget production but this is a very emotional film that uses the bond between sisters as the driving force for our main character Sam. Sarah Jeavons who plays Sam is just fantastic throughout in addition to be really attractive. Our supporting characters while more one dimensional fulfill their duty as kidnapping scumbags.

The film starts out really strong as our sisters are kidnapped and in the process of being transported Sam escapes. She finds a house in the woods and hides in a cabinet where she is slowing bleeding to death. This is were the film slows down and we spend most of our second act. I was totally with the film up to this point and then something crazy happens! What happens will either completely tank the film for you or as it did with me surprise the hell out of me and found it actually pretty refreshing.

I will admit there are some cheesy moments and some of the effects are a bit lackluster but with these lower budget productions I am much more willing to overlook this. I think this film has a lot of heart and its unfortunate the film ended the way it did just to have some cheesy last shot. So a big surprise for me and I feel a step above the usual horror VOD offerings. 3.5/5 stars.



Truth or Dare (2013)

Very reminiscent of the torture films that populated the horror genre in the early 2000s Truth or Dare is one of the more disturbing films I've seen in quite some time.

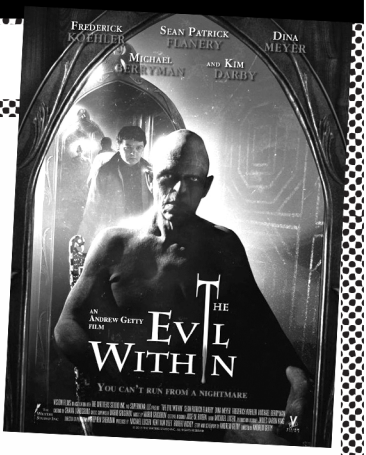
A group of people have a Youtube channel where they perform stunts based around the Truth or Dare party game. After their latest success they plan their latest stunt to be performed in an isolated house. Unfortunately for them they are visited by an uber fan who puts them through progressively more violent and disturbing dares.

The acting by our main characters here is not the greatest especially in the opening scenes but once we get past that it actually does get better. The main antagonist is annoyingly ADHD and you just want someone to shut him up. The practical effects here are actually really well done and even for someone like me who has seen my fair share of disturbing content I had a hard time.

So if you like your horror with more over the top content with little character buildup then this fits the bill. I can't say I "enjoyed" it but it was definitely effective. 3.5/5 stars.

CHRIS GENRO'S FILM REVIEWS

The Evil Within (2017)



Wow what a wonderful throwback horror film that reminded me of a 90s Full Moon production with some awesome imagery. As an added bonus its always great so see Michael Berryman who has such a distinct look about him and always adds a great creep factor. The film has a really great pace and character actor Frederick Koehler who plays our main character Dennis is really fantastic.

This film is definitely an acquired taste as it really feels like a film from another time and place. I I know many more modern viewers out there may watch this and probably not really enjoy it thinking its to cheesy or low budget but for me that's really where all its charm is.

The opening dream sequence is really fantastic and sucked me into the story immediately. This scene really sets things up for whats to come and announces that writer/director Andrew Getty has a unique voice and is going to give you something you haven't seen before. After this opening scene is more of a slow build till we get to the final act where the film goes for broke.

I had a really great time with this and its currently free on Amazon Prime so go check it out! As for me I'm going to do some reading on the behind the scenes of the film which apparently is an amazing story itself! 4/5 stars!

Without Name (2017)

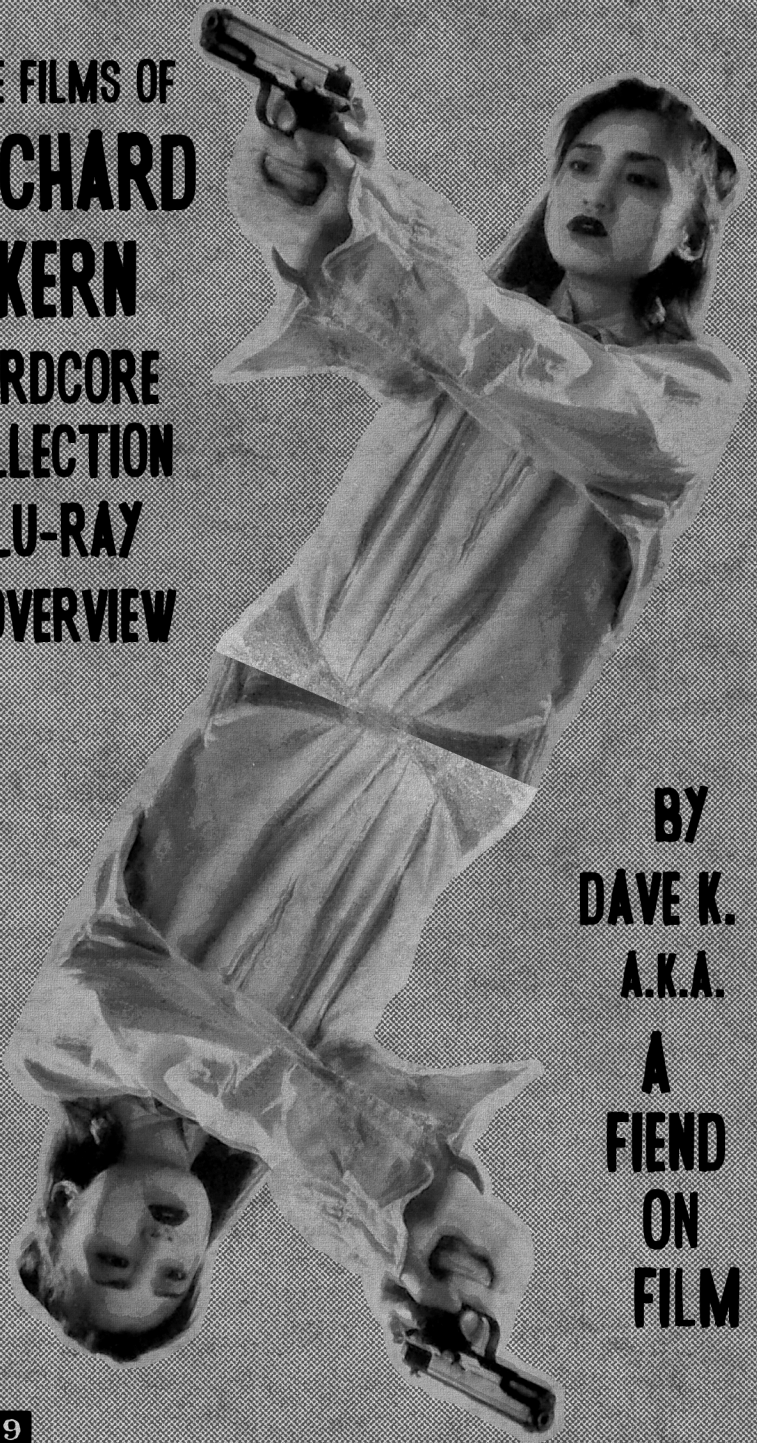
Where to start with this film? This is one hell of a trip to be sure and reminds me of many folk horror films that have come out of the Scotland, Ireland and the UK.

We are presented with Eric who is given a job to survey a woodland in the Irish countryside. The locals have stories about the woods that are without name and the "effect" they had on a previous resident of the village. As Eric spends more time in the woods strange things start to occur to him. Is someone playing a game with him or are the trees really alive?

The slow build of the film using long takes, amazing sound design and a creepy musical score builds this claustrophobic atmosphere as you feel the slowly woods closing in on our main character. Also the amazing shot composition and camera tricks that make the trees seem to move and gives them a kind of 3D effect. To think this is a debut film from Irish filmmaker Lorcan Finnegan!

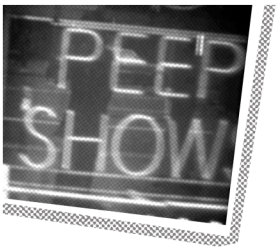
Where the film stumbles a bit is in its second act as we are introduced to another character and we fall into relationship drama cliches. Also the opening scene before Eric goes on his journey was a little to in your face. Despite this I recommend this if you love slow burn psychological horror. 3.5/5 stars.

THE FILMS OF RICHARD KERN HARDCORE COLLECTION BLU-RAY OVERVIEW



BY DAVE K. A.K.A. A FIEND ON FILM

09



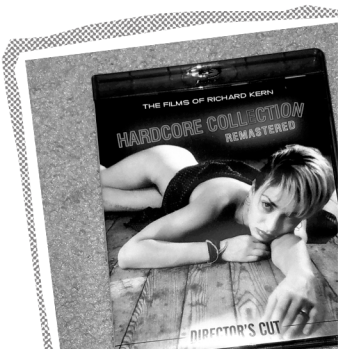
I am always late to the party. In my NYC days, I used to see flyers for the films of Richard Kern all over the East Village, in record stores & See Hear, a shop exclusively dedicated to small press and fanzines. I would only see bits of them and saw Right Side of My Brain in the late 80's with my friend Monica, who pretty much introduced me to this stuff. I have been well read on the films on this Bluray. Why has it taken me 20+ years to actually take the time to acquire and sit down with them? As I said, always late to the party.

The Films Of Richard Kern: Hardcore Collection is not the first time they have been all collected. It's been out on DVD. About two months ago, a couple of new friends online, Suzie and Adam Ayala, posted a still from one of the films randomly on my Facebook page and I was like, you know what... "I still never saw these!" So I searched and found this Bluray that was released by MVD Visual in 2012. I am not one of those people who knows every single edition of things released but this said it has everything, so I hit the buy button.



The first time in recent years where a film truly inspired me to want to go and get a camera and make a film was Shozin Fukui's Rubber's Lover (1996). Now I have found another in this complete collection of short films by Richard Kern. I knew I wanted to see the Lydia Lunch stuff first but wanted to follow the natural progress of Kern's filmography. I don't believe they are in exact order but you have 13 films with some odd stuff interspersed. These were originally shot on Super 8, so they all have a blown out, grainy feel. Seriously, these films all take me back to the 1980's NYC that I knew so well.

The Right Side of my Brain (1985) is the longest and most cinematic of the group. Lydia Lunch is set in different, mostly extremely wild scenes, with a long monologue spoken over. I did see this in the late 80's but didn't remember she actually gave oral sex on camera. Stark, blown out, black and white film makes this one something to see. Sumbit To Me & (the sequel) Sumbit To Me Now are other favorites here, both are just quick cuts of friend's





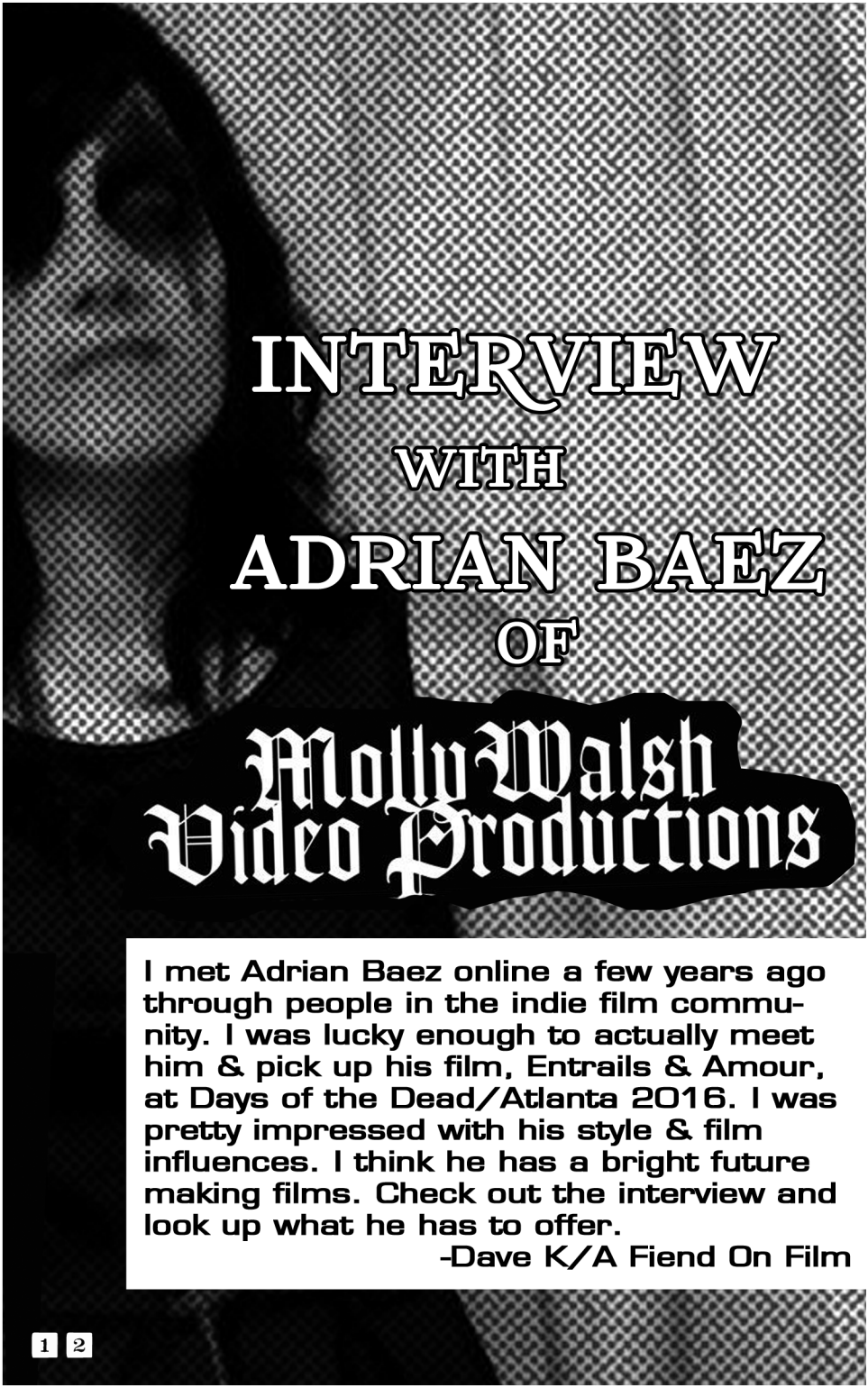
of Kern, doing some freaky shit. It must be noted that all of these films are totally NC-17 and /or X rated as there is a ton of nudity and plenty of well done practical gore FX. From Fingered (1988) on, it seems the films get more pornographic in nature.

The last film here, every man's fantasy becomes My Nightmare (1993), with Kern jerking off to a imaginative day dream about a model he is about to photograph. Let's just say....it doesn't go the way he plans. It should be noted, that if I would have seen the actress Lung Leg in person back then I would have fell in love. I recently found out she appears in a modern horror film called The Hagstone Demon, I am going to have to watch it again to see if I recognize her. Again, late to the party.

The most notable thing you will surely notice on this Blu Ray disc, besides the preservation of the films, is the sound. It is meant to be played loud. Even though most of the shorts have few lines of dialogue, the music just blasts you along with the images. It's just impressive. There are a few small “bonus” materials but really the only one of note is the new interview with Kern, explaining how all these films were done. As I thought, by the seat of his pants. He even states, he doesn't even know how he cut this stuff, since he was using substandard equipment. The interview makes the disc and answered many of my questions.

I only scratched the surface here as I am having a hard time putting into words how this collection of films made me feel. It is an absolute must. Aside from the short, Stray Dogs (1985), which frankly I just did not get, everything here are 10s. Literal excitement from beginning to end. I need to start collecting his photography books, as I have some catching up to do.





INTERVIEW WITH ADRIAN BAEZ OF Molly Walsh Video Productions

I met Adrian Baez online a few years ago through people in the indie film community. I was lucky enough to actually meet him & pick up his film, Entrails & Amour, at Days of the Dead/Atlanta 2016. I was pretty impressed with his style & film influences. I think he has a bright future making films. Check out the interview and look up what he has to offer.

-Dave K/A Fiend On Film

1) I have known you for a few years now & have always been impressed that you are so young & have a few short films under your belt already. How did this start? What made you "pick up the camera" so to speak?

I came across reviews on Severed-Cinema of In Hell Production's "Nekro" and also reviews for Tumbling Doll of Flesh and then found Women's Flesh. So intrigued about these weird films I wanted to find more, so, I joined in on the group pages months later on Facebook, trying to find these movies and found more bizarre movies and even the filmmakers themselves.

Way later I was toying with the idea about sharing my "work" but was hesitant. I was invited to set one day after helping friend of mine, Shane Ryan, at his premiere. When I came up on set I noticed the director who invited me, Craig McIntyre (LA Ripper) was on a handheld camera directing and filming himself. I then noticed Shane Ryan (APSK Trilogy, My Name is "A") doing the same thing and eventually met the In Hell Production guys, and these guys are the dudes who made me search for their movies and more obscure cinema, and made me want to make more stuff and I found out they where doing the same thing even on a slightly bigger scale.

So that's when I decided to go ham, and make my short stories and movies, and photography, because I didn't think I was alone doing it this way. I just needed a push.

2) Why horror & dark films? Why are you so drawn to these genres?

Well I grew up loving movies, my grandfather helped raised me and was basically my father figure, so you look up to that person. My grandfather watched a lot of horror films and westerns. I even think he wrote a western/horror flick (which I'm still trying to locate) but that was my first run in with movies.

I then hung out with one of my cousins a lot and that's where cinema got pushed. We always tried to find new things. After that I took it on myself to find unknown films, and collecting and taking photos and small videos.



I personally think that why I attached to dark cinema and horror films is, I couldn't watch them at a certain point I couldn't

handle the sight of blood and gore, didn't understand FX or that it was fake. And after watching a gory movie that my cousin took me too (again someone I looked up too) I didn't wanna seem like (excuse my choice of words) a bitch, and I forced myself to take it in. After that I was fine, I could watch any horror film, any gore movies and such. I found the fascination in all the things the horror genre can tie together and especially what happens BTS to create the gore and horror.

3) What type of camera are you using to shoot with? Is it really a case of just picking up a small camcorder or cell phone & just running with it?

I currently shoot on a T5i and before that was a Canon GL1!

I would shoot on pretty much anything, except a phone camera (unless my battery died). I think there still has to be some production too it. Some type of seriousness and equipment to push your work. A bad camera, will lead to bad visuals which people may want to turn off. Same goes with audio, and story! Story is #1 but you could have a kickass story if you can't show it and present it well enough, it's just gonna get turned off or passed over.

Equipment is a headache but it's necessary and secondary, but you have to realize it's still secondary and needed.

4) How do you get around the limitations of "having a small budget"? I know you are in the modern social media age and you use it to look for funds. What are the problems you come across in trying to get money & what is a "good budget" for you to start shooting?

I plan like a motherfucker. I'm in LA and it sucks it makes it harder to get what you want. I write out every single cost (+$10) to have comfortable budgeting. I bought my camera so it wasn't a worry, my biggest issues are location, and actors. My budget goes really to blood, FX and



Lauren Faulkner in **The Bizarre Art of Samantha**



Actors. I love to toss all the main budget to the actors. If I'm giving $80-250 to an actor well it's still low on the "Hollywood" end, but in the end they're making my vision true with their talent.



I have a couple very supportive customers/fans/friends that want to see stuff from me! I always try to build up the funds but I will NOT ask for money from people UNLESS I make at least 3/4ths the budget! If I can't do that I won't lean on someone to give it to me. However, social media fund asking is just bad. I don't like asking, I hate that money is needed to make art, but that's literally what it goes too, I buy little to nothing for myself (living wise) all goes to budget to get the film made. During filming I'm on moderate to no money.

So if anyone wants to see more art from me and has the money I'll gladly accept! If not... it will just take a little longer to create.

5) Does living where you live (Los Angeles) make it easier to find like minded people to work with? Have you tried (or desire) to work in the "industry" at all?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! The lovely actors who have agreed to work and do my weird movies and are friends now, and accept my payments for shoots ARE THE LIKE MINDED PEOPLE that I found through hundreds and hundreds of talent here. Everyone thinks they're someone here. Everyone thinks they need that $250 an hour pay. I much rather pay my interesting friends and actors from previous to make new art cause they care and want to make something.

Out of the 100 actors in LA, 3 would be down to do it for free, cheap, or experience, and there's always an issues to when finding them like no transportation, not available that specific day and so on. I love the actors/friends that agree and are and have been apart of my Productions!

They're too awesome.

I will NEVER work as a Director (the way I'm doing it now) for a living to continue going forward. If someone saw my stuff and I started doing the next Guardian of the Galaxy... sure. However, this way, where I am casting, editing, fil-

ing, location scouting, writing, nope. I don't wanna be apart of it. Let me be a cinematographer or an editor and only that then maybe I'll consider working in the "industry" other than that... a hard No!

This is strictly cause I enjoy art, movies, and photography. If I was rich I'd still be doing it, if I was dirt poor I'd still try to do it, while searching for work.



Kathleen Maressa & Nick Principe in Queen Wasp

6) What is your latest project and how did it come about?

The latest project is "The Bizarre Art of Samantha" aiming to get a small first edition release January 31st!

The film was a brief idea I wrote down. It's the same premise as the plot now! However, when elaborating it to a feature length time I bit off more than I could chew with trying to make it into small part with MANY different people, confusing story arcs and I just couldn't do it with the budget given. So I re-wrote it and adjusted it to budget. The current story is 85% to what I originally wrote down. I'm quite happy with it and the choices I made for the cast!

The movie is really different from my previous, I tried to keep my "style" I tried to AIM to make it weird and awkward and "what the fuck?" It's my attempt at a dark comedy and alien type bots from other earth dimensions. I basically took everything I wanted to do combined it into one movie and added my humor. I may be the only one laughing at these, but it's definitely a weird, fucked up, obscure movie. Which can be pre-ordered now at: www.mollywalshvideostore.storenvy.com along with other remaining products!

Molly Walsh Video Productions

7) Any advice for the promising (young or old) film maker?

Don't. Don't do it!

If you know people, do it. If you are wealthy, do it. If it's ONLY a passion hobby and you plan on doing a single job along with it, do it. Get a camera, find people with the same thought process, when involving art. Work fucking hard on that script make it unique. Study cinema and bring something people haven't seen or (the secret) rarely see... and do it.

If you plan to make a living (or money in general), don't do it. If you think that its instant fame, there isn't. IF you think another snuff film/ghost film with shaky camera is a legitimately good idea, it's not. It's not a place to fuck around anymore, it can burn a deep hole in your pocket, only to have your movie be ignored for the next best thing... the next day.

If it's a passion and you LOVE movies and don't care about the money it makes and you spent time and maximum effort on it. By all means welcome.

Please do look at Adrian's films here:
www.mollywalshvideostore.storenvy.com
& look up the Facebook page here!
https://www.facebook.com/MollyWalshVP

Black Box Figures and Props

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HEADLESS

(2015)

film review by Danni Winn



Directed by: Arthur Cullipher Written by: Nathan Erdel
Story and Characters by: Todd Rigney
Starring: Shane Beasley, Kelsey Carlisle, and Ellie Church



Want a movie which the depravity begins almost as soon as the opening credits are concluded? Do you enjoy skull fucking and gratuitous coke fueled doggie style sex with cannibalism? Then look no further, because this one is your type of flick. HEADLESS is the follow up to the multi award winning 2012 film FOUND directed by Scott Schirmer, which depicts the characters created by Todd Rigney from his 2004 novel. HEADLESS was actually a movie-within-the-movie, a "lost slasher film from 1978". In FOUND, the plot follows the ordeals of a young boy obsessed with horror, who later finds out his older brother is a psychotic serial killer. The movie earned 36 awards and had Elvira herself describe it, "As horror as horror can get."

Almost without hesitation the menacing Skullhead killer inflicts a brutal demise for a young lady as HEADLESS just barely gets started! This movie is graphic and deranged,the madness ensuing quickly and just progresses throughout the course of the film. A solitary killer ravaged psychologically by an upbringing unsuitable for any living thing. He is alone in every aspect of the word. He sleeps within a large dog cage, just like he has been trained to do by the overwhelmingly abusive mother and sister of his. In flash backs we can witness the inhumane treatments including everything from starvation, incest, and severe neglect. His sister was a complete narcissist and masterful manipulator. His mother just downright nasty and seemingly void of any maternal instinct. The unwanted boy raised in a cage never developed the ability to utilize speech, never having been taught. To have some kind of companionship and respite from the onslaught of unbridled torture, the boy created a version of himself to connect with.

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This is where I'd like to mention how fucking creepy the disturbed killers 'imaginary younger self' is. Just like his creator, his inability to articulate has left him with

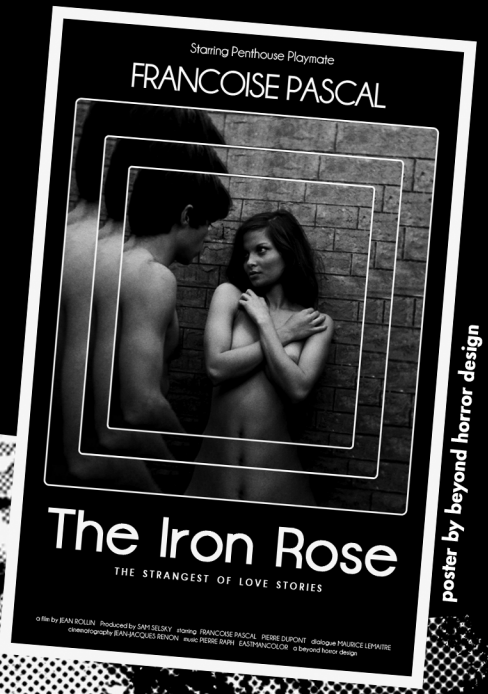
almost no communication skills. Demonic click clack like chatter is the young 'friends' only means of conveying his wants aside from the ominous silent and steady pointing of his finger. This usually signifies the violence he demands to be inflicted upon some poor female captive. The violence usually entails eye gouging, mutilation, necrophilia, and indulging in the consuming of the eyeballs of his victims. The creepy little Skullface silently enjoying the rampages he initiates in the dark corners of the killers imagination.

Along with the oodles of symbolic imagery from the killers mind and the fantastic and dreadful original score conjured up by director Cullipher, Mike Anderson and James Nash, was an unexpected treasure trove of comedic delight. The banter between the young female coworkers and their boss at the local roller rink is priceless, lending us some great one liners and laughs. My favorite though, being the dialogue between Jess (Kelsey Carlisle) and her out of work musician boyfriend Dave (Pete Christy). Waking up late one afternoon, and immediately getting on task with rolling a doobie, a argument breaks out between the two about his unemployment and the fact he just awoke to begin smoking some doja. "It's like my coffee! I just woke up.....by the way do we have any coffee?" Thank Jebus there was some comedic relief, because the graphic and unyielding nature of HEADLESS was at times almost overbearing. And if anyone knows me, I LOVE GORE! I get irritated if someone doesn't die within the first ten minutes of a horror film, so "almost overbearing" say a shit load coming from me!

I enjoyed the fact the filmmakers let us be made aware of the reasons he came to be, instead of just having a maniac on the loose for unknown reasons. We understood his hate and distrust of women was stemming from the awful upbringing via his mother and sister. I almost empathized with him on a few occasions, and I give the films creators credit for this. Because how on earth could you possibly feel for such a vicious predator? I did though, because I knew he was a product of his environment, and yes his mom and sis obviously had pure Evil coursing through their veins, but that doesn't necessarily mean he would have been the same if given a fair shake at life. HEADLESS is not for the faint of heart I can promise you that. If you're in the mood for some uber violent and gory deaths, give this one a gander. I liked that it payed homage to the slashers of old, not being flashy or overthinking the back story. HEADLESS contained some solid cinematography paired with some impressive practical effects and probably one of the best designs and use of a villainous mask in recent times. There was only a few instances where I felt the actor(s) didn't take the scene where it needed to go, holding back some, but all in all I enjoyed it. It was a sick piece of cinema and I approved.

KIM McDONALD looks at





poster by beyond horror design

Jean Rollin's THE IRON ROSE



This review contains spoilers

I am always trying to get people to watch Jean Rollin's films. Unfortunately he, like Jess Franco, often gets dismissed as a maker of artsy sleaze. While understandable, I think this is an unfair assessment of both men's work. I find that while most are familiar with Rollin's vampire films – and the awful ZOMBIE LAKE – THE IRON ROSE is the one film they usually have not seen. I think it solidifies Rollin as a singular visual filmmaker.

THE IRON ROSE is different from all of Rollin's other films. There are no lesbian vampires with ridiculous fangs or laughable Nazi zombies. The story is simple and loose. The dialogue is sparse. It is the imagery that makes THE IRON ROSE stand out – more than a story about a couple getting lost in a cemetery, it's Rollin's fever-dream version of the Garden of Eden.

Everything in THE IRON ROSE is pared down to the most basic elements. The two main characters don't even refer to each other by name until late in the film. Rollin prefers to tell his story through scenery, body language, and facial expressions. He uses lighting and camera angles to create an unsettled, moody atmosphere indicative of the characters' unraveling and turning on each other.

Rollin's characters often cross boundaries from reality into bizarre otherworlds. THE IRON ROSE opens with The Girl (Françoise Pascal) walking alone along a rocky beach flanked with rows of wood pylons and a high cliff wall. She finds a wrought iron rose in the surf and tosses it back; an exchange with eternity. The Girl is then seen emerging from mist-shrouded woods into a clearing. Even during the wedding reception, where she meets The Guy (Hugue Quester), she is separate. She doesn't engage with – or seem noticed by – anyone but him.

Rollin sets up his Garden of Eden theme by contrasting images of a decaying town, with its post-war-damaged buildings and an empty rusting train yard, against the sprawling cemetery overgrown with trees and weeds. The couple wander deeper down the paths. Pascal, of course, is more reluctant and seems deeply affected by the graves and the crucifixes. Quester is more of a realist and claims not to believe in anything after death. Maurice LeMâitre wrote the dialogue, which is scarce and centered mostly around Pascal's increasing fascination with the dead.





2 1



While the couple is the main focus of the film, Rollin does add a few interesting cameos from his previous works. We see a vampire (Michel Delesalle) and a clown (Mireille Dargent), both from REQUIEM FOR A VAMPIRE. Rollin even shows up as a creepy guy in a dirty yellow robe who leers at Pascal. There is also an old lady in black (Natalie Perrey, LIPS OF BLOOD) who wanders the cemetery, putting flowers on the graves.

The couple finds an open underground crypt and have sex. When they come out, it is night and they have to try to find their way out of the cemetery, which becomes a huge maze. Every time they think they've found the front gate, they have only found yet another section. The lighting is low and distant, and the gravestones and crucifixes seem to glare down at the couple. Their fear gets the best of them and turn against each other, becoming violent at times.

Rollin spends a lot of camera time on Pascal, whose beauty is both sensual and fragile. As the film progresses, she appears to be seduced by voices only she hears. She tries to convince Quester that they should stay in the cemetery; that only among the dead can they truly live. He is alternately afraid of and fascinated by her. They have sex again in an open grave (atop bones and skulls) while the camera spins around them.

Pascal finds the iron rose in the hand of a stone angel and uses it to lure Quester back to the original crypt. She locks him inside and begins a weird dance through the cemetery as he begs her to let him out. As day breaks, she opens the crypt and lowers herself into it, stating: "You are all dead. We are alive." Rollin's rejection of a world that can corrupt and decay in exchange for a crystal palace of eternity is complete.

Kim McDonald https://loudgreenbird.com
Follow on Twitter: @dixiefairy

MONDO CANE

MONDO CANE (in English: "Dog World") is a notorious, groundbreaking documentary showing bizarre examples of human behavior in different societies of the world, the Western world included. Featured are mating practices among natives in New Guinea, religious rituals involving snake handling and self-flagellation among Italian Catholics, and various segments featuring cruelty to animals which are very difficult to watch.

Some of the segments are lighthearted and amusing. For example, there is an extended look at a group of elderly American tourists in Hawaii trying to learn how to dance the Hula. And there is a look inside a sophisticated New York restaurant where very chic individuals are eating cooked insects and appear to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. The film takes a slightly darker turn with a look at several Germans staggering through the streets after a night of serious drinking, and a yearly event in Portugal where men try not to get killed by bulls let loose in the town square. The film makers seem to be making the point that so-called "civilized" Westerners haven't advanced all that much beyond the people of New Guinea and other remote cultures.

One of the saddest segments shows the effect of nuclear testing by the United States on the environment of the Bikini Atoll. The camera follows sea turtles who go on land to lay their eggs. But they are no longer able to find their way back to the sea and instead travel inland where they will die. The film shows the beaches littered with their decaying skeletons. So much for the advancement of civilization.

These dark and sometimes grotesque segments are made all the more shocking by being interspersed among the lighter, more amusing parts. There is also a beautiful, romantic music score composed by Ritz Ortolani. The music is so lovely that it almost seems inappropriate for such a strange and visceral film. The main theme became world famous as the song "More". Romantic lyrics were written for the melody and it was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Song of 1962.

MONDO CANE is essential viewing for any student of film history as well as anyone fascinated by world cultures. However, be forewarned that there is some extreme cruelty to animals that may be disturbing to many viewers, especially children.



By Michael E. Wilson

HORROR MAGS

memories by chris woods

There have been many horror magazines throughout the years, going way back to 1958 with Famous Monsters of Filmland. As for me, the pinnacle days of collecting these horror mags was in the late 80's, where a slew of these were on newsstands and in bookstores and for a kid that was just getting into horror films, this was a great time. Of course, the big one at that time was Fangoria, which also had many spin-off mags at that time. Other publications started to pour out to compete with the big dog. Some of them lasted a few years, others lasted a few issues. For me, the more horror magazines they had in stores the better.

I started my horror magazine collecting in 1988. A year before, I started to get into horror movies, watching them on TV and renting videos out, I was hooked on horror. I also stopped collecting comics in 1987, so in some way this filled the void. The first horror mag I bought was Fangoria. It was in the Fall of '88, the October issue #78 with Pinhead from Hellraiser on the cover promoting Hellbound: Hellraiser II. My friend, Craig had bought his first Fango early that summer and he even had a special issue that was their popular poster edition. I remember looking at his magazines and I was thrilled that I discovered a new medium of the genre that I loved. Right after that, I bought my first Fango and the rest is history.

Back then Fangoria was the shit! The magazine debuted in 1979 and was a spin-off of sorts to the sci-fi mag, Starlog. It did however, have articles on sci-fi, fantasy and horror movies when it began, but towards the early 80's, when horror was really hot, it was mainly just about horror



movies. It delivered and filled up my horror cravings. Not only did it have articles on current films, but it also had articles on classic films going as far back to the 1950's. So, Fango help me discover old gems and kept me up to date on what new horror was coming out. It also had tons of interviews with genre actors and directors. I would finally put a face with the name of many of the directors I was following at that time. It was a great resource, because the interviews with the filmmaker would talk about how they got started and their inspiration to making their films. For an inspiring filmmaker like myself at the time, this was very helpful.

My collecting was almost short-lived, because I was actually banned from buying any horror magazine at one time. My grandfather saw I started collecting these magazines and thought they were disgusting and didn't want me reading them. He thought they would corrupt my mind and turn me into a serial killer or something. So, I couldn't buy any horror mags anymore. This lasted about a month or two. I saw the latest issue of Fango and it had news on the death of Duane Jones, Ben from Night of the Living Dead. Being a huge NOTLD fan, I had to buy it and I did. This time I just kept all my horror magazines hidden like they were porn mags. After that, my collecting went into overdrive.

Fangoria wasn't just the only mag I collected. When getting my first issue of Fango, I discovered an add for another horror magazine that Fangoria's parent company Starlog was publishing. This magazine was called Gorezone. The magazine came out in 1988 and was kind of like a spin-off the way Fango was to Starlog back in 1979. I'll always remember this add, because it had the cover of the premiere issue that had Leatherface on it from Texas Chainsaw Massacre Part 2. I never got the first issue of the mag, I believe the back issue was always sold out. Gorezone was similar to Fango, but it had more articles dealing with special effects and of course, the gore in horror films. It also had at one time a horror short story section, which I actually enjoyed, but it didn't last long. I started to collect Gorezone in late '88 and stopped around '93, I believe it ended its run around then. I liked the magazine, but thought it wasn't as good as it's counterpart.

1989 was a pivotal year for horror magazines. There were at least seven or so active magazines out at that time and most of them debuted in that year. Going into Walden's Books and finding brand new horror mags was exciting and it showed that there was a wide variety to choose from. Since I was all ready collecting two magazines I couldn't really afford collecting another one or two. The good thing was that there was two months out of the year, Fango didn't put out an issue and GoreZone was every other month. So, on those off months I would buy a different

horror mag and see if they were worth collecting over the other ones.

One of these new mags was called Slaughter House, which started in 1989. I collected a few of these that year and liked the magazine very much. It seemed to be a bit more edgier than Fangoria at times. Showing more pics of gore and even some nudity from the hot scream queens of that era. The magazine mainly wrote about current films and didn't have that much retro in their pages, but it often talk about more independent horror than mainstream. The cover was even different from others because of the kind of paper they used. It was a glossy cover rather than the matte ones the others had. Nowadays, mostly every magazine, horror or not has a glossy cover. I guess it was something Slaughter House wanted to show that they were a more stylish magazine then the others, at least on the outside. I remember inside, lots of the pictures from some of the articles were in black and white, so most of the printing cost probably went into the cover. Unfortunately, Slaughter House only lasted a few issues and I believe never even lasted a whole year.

Another magazine debuted that same year, HorrorFan, which was kind of a generic version of Fango. They seemed to try to be a copy of Fangoria with the type of articles and columns they had. Nonetheless, the magazine was a good edition in the growing number of horror mags. I remember it had a lot of articles on retro horror of the 50's and 60's. It would often be a good mixture of new and old horror throughout the magazine. I had a few issues of HorrorFan as well and it lasted longer than Slaughter House. I believe it was around for less than two years.

Also, in 1989, Starlog put out a third horror magazine, Toxic Horror. Since there was some competition out there, Starlog felt they had to dominate the market by having three horror magazines. I bought the first issue of Toxic Horror and every single issue after that, which there were only three total I believe. Toxic Horror was the worst of the bunch.



It was just a retread of what was in Fangoria or GoreZone. It was a terrible magazine that had a very short life.

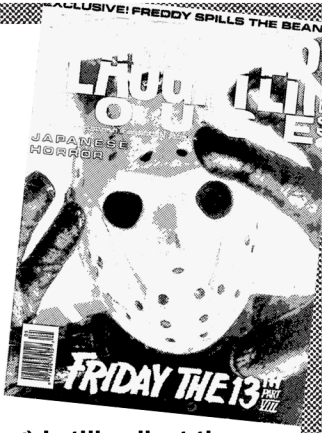
Other magazines that were out during this time period were Deep Red and Midnight Marquee. A company out of Upstate New York called FantaCo, which also published many horror books and comics, started Deep Red. The magazine debuted in 1986 and often focused on European horror with likes of Dario Argento and Lucio Fulci. Deep Red was never sold in stores where I lived, so I never got a chance to read it. I say an ad for it in a GoreZone a few times. Fangoria and GoreZone use to often advertise items from FantaCo. I sent away for one of their catalogs, which featured books and comics published from them, such as the novels to Blood Feast and 2000 Maniacs and the Night of the Living Dead comics. They also sold horror movies, toys, models, trading cards, you name it and they had it.

Midnight Marquee, which started way back in 1963 under the name Gore Creatures, was also around during that time. Although in the late 80's they were only doing an issue a year. Its heyday was back in the 60's and 70's and started to decline in the 80's. Actually the magazine is still around and still only does an issue a year, even missing a few years . In this decade. I have the 25th anniversary issue that came out in 1988 and published by FantaCo. I sent away for it years after it had come out. It was an actual book instead of a magazine and was a very good read. Not sure if all their other issues were books, but that would explain why they started doing issues once a year. Midnight Marquee mostly covered classic horror and was very Famous Monsters like.

Femme Fatales was a magazine all about scream queens. It came out after the peek of the horror mags in late 80's and debuted in 1992. Around this time they weren't many horror mags out, just Fango and GoreZone and that mag was on its last legs. I got the first issue of Femme Fatales, which featured a naked Brinke Stevens, which was a very memorable hot cover for their debut. The first issue had a who's who of scream queens from Jaime Lee Curtis to Linnea Quigley.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention Famous Monsters of Filmland. Without that magazine they wouldn't be a Fangoria or any other horror mag. I have to say I never collected Famous Monsters because they weren't out during the time when I was collecting. They stopped publication in 1983 and then started back up again in 1993. Probably one of these days when I'm at a trade show, I'll look for old back issues of FM and pick up a couple. Speaking of back issues, I use to order a few from the back catalog of Fangoria. Wanted to get #1, but it was always sold out, but I did get #2 and #3. I got a few back issues that

had interviews or articles on my favorite directors or movies, like Herschell Gordon Lewis (an issue with a 1983 interview with the filmmaker) and George Romero's Night of the Living Dead (an issue in early 1988 with an article about the 20th anniversary of the film).



Today, they are still many horror magazines around from Rue Morgue, Video Watchdog, Horrorhound, and many others. Fangoria is still kicking and just celebrated their 30th anniversary this year. (ed note: as this article was written a couple of years ago, Fangoria stop publishing) I still collect the mag, but it's not as good as use to be. In fact, the last time Fango was a great horror mag was 15 years ago. I did start collecting Horrorhound, which is pretty good. They focus on retro horror and hardly do any major articles on horror of today, which is good, because most of the horror of today completely sucks. Horrorhound has the vibe of a great classic magazine from the time when I first started collecting. I'm glad it's around now and I'm also glad to have been a part of a time when horror magazines were at a huge boom in the late 1980's.



The lights are low, the air is thin
My thoughts are racing wondering when
I get as small as I can to hide in the darkness
I back in so far that the world becomes colorless
I hear what I think is death stalking
There is a chill in the air as I feel the Haunting
Down the hall a shadow is coming
Though as hard as I try I can make out nothing
The smell of death is in the air
It surrounds me to the point my senses impair
The sounds getting louder with the sound of doom
Oh how I wish the quiet would resume.
I realize I'm the last one and suddenly feel so alone
It gets harder and harder to lie in the unknown
The steps get louder and suddenly there is a feeling of terror
I realize no matter the wait it won't get any clearer
I make my move with very little thought
I instantly know I've been caught
I feel a hand on my back and a pain in my head
It's too late now even too late for dread
Blood on my neck my eyesight goes dark
I lie on the ground as I start to depart
I catch a glimpse of the thing that shows no remorse
It's the monster, the alien, the Xenomorph

By James Higgins

PHANTASM RAVAGER

Phantasm V: Ravager (2016), an unworthy apocalyptic end to a once great franchise. by John Leavengood

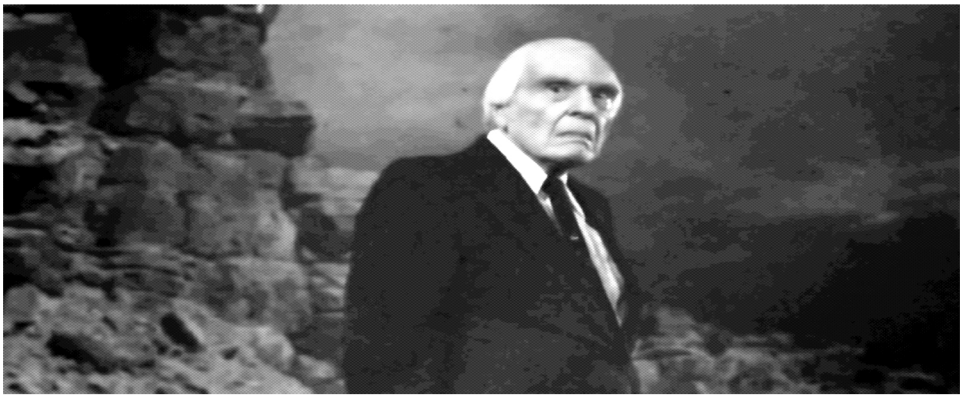
MY CALL: This is the only film in the series I didn't like at all. Completely uninspired, yet still boasting our favorite characters reunited yet again and some nice ideas that find only the poorest execution.
MORE MOVIES LIKE Phantasm V: Ravager: There is little out there that compares to these films, so I'll just suggest starting with Phantasm (1979) and Phantasm II (1988)—both of which are far better—and only then perhaps should one venture the subsequent sequels Phantasm III: Lord of the Dead (1994), which paled in comparison to parts 1-2, and Phantasm IV: Oblivion (1998), which finally started to offer us some answers to the mysteries behind the Tall Man.

With a filmography almost entirely composed of animated children's series, director David Hartman (Transformers Prime, My Friends Tigger & Pooh, Jackie Chan Adventures, Astro Boy) is a rather "interesting" choice to follow up the four previous Phantasm films from the mind of writer/director Don Coscarelli (Phantasm 1-4, The Beastmaster, Bubba Ho-Tep). About now you might be hypothesizing about what talents or perspective he might bring to the table. I'll save you the trouble... the answer is none at all.



Phantasm IV: Oblivion (1998) revealed something of a time travel loop, resulting in Mike (A. Michael Baldwin; Phantasm 1-5) being left presumably for dead now that the sphere (with his brain probably inside according to Lord of the Dead) was removed by the Tall Man (Angus Scrimm; Phantasm 1-5, Subspecies, Wishmaster). Now in Ravager, Reggie (Reggie Bannister; Phantasm 1-5, Wishmaster) has been searching the American wastelands for nearly two decades in search of Mike and the Tall Man.

Toying with the notions of time travel, dreams and alternate dimensions, we switch back and forth between a "possible" future and present (maybe two presents). In one of these times/dimensions, Reggie is older and senile. He tries to explain the whole Phantasm story to Mike, who visits him and explains that he was found wandering the desert like Moses with dementia. In another, he's joining freedom fighters against the Tall Man, his dwarves and his now giant balls in a post-apocalyptic war zone.



We cover some familiar plot points of parts 2-4—most notably when Reggie picks up a cute hitchhiker (Dawn Cody) much younger than him and tries to sleep with her. Also, like parts 3-4, there are some rather zany scenes, among them is a neat visit from the Lady in Lavender (Kathy Lester; Phantasm 1 & 3) and a curious sighting of a giant silver sphere.

So now we find ourselves almost 20 years after Oblivion (1998) and despite all technological advancements these evil CGI balls just don't measure up to the metal spheres of the early films. Don't even get me started on the just plain stupid death scenes—all from lame ball impalements and lame ball blood spews that don't look as good as parts 1-3... or boring gunplay. Moreover, this is easily the worst written and least inspired installment of the series. The camera shots are lame and basic, and the "television movie" atmosphere is akin to an R-rated movie on the Hallmark or Lifetime Network.



But let's appreciate the "good" here. While, I must sadly admit this is the only Phantasm movie I didn't enjoy, there were some cool attempts at meshing the same characters across different dimensions along a linear timeline. I felt that it didn't work, but the thought was there. My understanding (from gleaning the IMDB trivia page) is that portions of this were originally a web-series picking up the story after Oblivion (1998), and then they decided to film more content and string it together as a film. This was simultaneously a great and terrible idea. Great in continuing to develop the story, terrible idea. Great in continuing to develop the story, terrible in having such a low budget that nothing looked good.

Overall, this was not good. I found it quite disappointing even as a major fan of the franchise. The best thing about this film was the ongoing reunion of A. Michael Baldwin, Angus Scrimm, Bill Thornbury and Reggie Bannister from 1979 to 2016.



You can find John on Twitter at: @MFFHorrorCorner & at:

https://moviesfilmsandflix.com/category/johns-horror-corner-3

SLAUGHTERHOUSE

Film & Bluray REVIEW!

by Greg Baty of cinesploitation.com

Director: Rick Roessler

Cast: Joe B. Barton, Don Barrett, Sherry Leigh

Vinegar Syndrome / All Region / Unrated / 1.85:1 widescreen (1080p) / English DTS-HD 5.1 / 85 minutes

EXTRAS: Commentary track with Director Rick Roessler, Producer Jerry Encoe & Production Designer Michael Scaglione / New video interview with Lead Actress Sherry Bendorf Leigh / "Making a Low Budget Indie" – Featurette with Rick Roessler / "Producing Slaughterhouse" – Interview with Jerry Encoe / Archival interviews with Rick Roessler & Jerry Encoe / "Epilogue: 30 Years After the Slaughter" / Radio interview featurette from 1987 / Local news coverage from the theatrical premiere / Behind the scenes featurette / Outtakes / "No Smoking" SLAUGHTERHOUSE snipe / Multiple theatrical trailers, tv & radio spots / Shooting script gallery / Reversible cover artwork



There is nothing that makes me happier than a good old-fashioned slasher flick. The onslaught (see what I did there?) of hack-n-slash horror movies in the '80s made this then 10-yr-old boy the fan he is today. When the VHS rental boom happened and I was finally into my teen years, I would comb the entire store for these movies with covers featuring a killer holding a knife or chainsaw or maybe even an axe. Yeah, sometimes these gems would be thrown in with the Thrillers (DePalma's films were notoriously here), Dramas and even Action (Maniac Cop, anyone?) but they couldn't escape me! The only way I missed one is if it was always checked out which seemed to be the case with Rick Roessler's Pig Farm Massacre aka Slaughterhouse.

The titular slaughterhouse is owned by a crotchety old hermit named Lester Bacon (really) who has refused to upgrade his farm with technology and is in danger of losing it because of back taxes. So the tax man, the competition and the sheriff are all on Bacon's hit-list and who should take them out? Well, his mentally deficient, giant, lumbering oaf of a son Buddy, who speaks in pig 'oinks' and squeals of course! Getting caught up in all of the revenge killing is a group of young people who are filming a horror movie and think that the old slaughterhouse would be the perfect location. They are right in that it is definitely a horror show in there. One by one they are picked off by Lester and Buddy until there if just one left; the ubiquitous "final girl" (whose name is "Lizzy Borden", really).



I get a special feeling in my pants when I am watching a great slasher flick. The requirements are pretty simple: a brisk pace, large body count, gory kills and an interesting killer(s). I do prefer some boobies and sexy time in there too (which Slaughterhouse does not offer) but it's not a deal breaker. The setting is pretty important too and one of the best is a rural area and/or a farm, i.e. Texas Chainsaw Massacre ('74) and Motel Hell, two of my favs. Another trait that Slaughterhouse shares with Motel Hell is it's silly yet still a little dark sense of humor. One of the best scenes in the whole movie is Buddy dressing up like the dead cop, stealing his car and tearing down the back country roads Dukes of Hazard style! I kept expecting Sheriff Roscoe P. Coltrane to come whipping out of one of the side roads to give chase.

The opening credits are of an actual slaughterhouse, putting pigs through the process with big band music playing in the background. It was both

off-putting and comical at the same time. The use of radio announcements, the cinematography and even the macabre set pieces makes me think that Rick Roessler was a huge Texas Chainsaw Massacre fan. There are a couple of tracking shots that are clones of shots in Hooper's legendary masterpiece but the very obvious homage is one particular set that is a complete ripoff. Animal remains and bones are strung up to look like home decorations as the camera lingers there to heighten the tension. I don't blame them for taking inspiration from the best horror movie of all time, but it's pretty blatant.



So what kind of release would you expect for a little known yet highly sought after slasher flick from the '80s? Bare bones? A muddy DVD ripped from a VHS print? Nah, fuck that. Vinegar Syndrome ain't about that. They took this gory low-budget slash-fest and gave it the royal blu-ray restoration treatment with a shit-load of extra features, over a dozen to be exact! So not only do you get a fun, gory slasher movie complete with '80s clothes and hairstyle, dancing and Buddy with his huge hog-leg axe, but it's full of extras to nibble on. Now you don't have to look for those hard-to-find VHS and DVDs floating around out there for outrageous prices, just hit up your favorite online retailer (mine is Grindhouse Video!) or Vinegar Syndrome themselves and get your hands on this killer of a rural slasher film!

Grindhouse VIDEO
706 West MLK Blvd Tampa, Florida, FL 33603
grindhousevideo.com

Wandering Women:
Four Types of Female Ghosts and Why They're Scary

by Kristi Petersen Schoonover

There's no mistaking that urban legends tend to favor the female ghost: along with "ladies" of every spectral color (from green and blue to grey, white, brown, red and even pink), we've all heard of Bloody Mary, the Bell Witch, and Screaming Jenny. While there's no evidence to support that female haunters are any more frightening than their male counterparts, it's interesting to note that females—many who have been featured in my own fiction—seem to be more terrifying because of what they represent.
Here are four of my favorites. What do you think?

The Faceless/Altered Woman

Many cultures have variations of the faceless or altered woman.

In Japan, there is the noppera-bo, who at first can appear as someone the victim knows; then the face dissolves completely, even though the body and head are still there. This apparition is sometimes confused with the mujina, a magical badger who can take the shape of a faceless woman (in my short story, "Mujina," published in Skinwalker Press's Dark Passages II: Tales from the Black Highway, I used the concept of noppera-bo but called it mujina with intent: noppera-bo just didn't have as melodic a ring to it within the context of the narrative).

Japan also has the Slit-Mouthed Woman. There are many variations of the tale, but the one usually told most is that she was a woman whose jealous husband thought she was cheating. He slashed her mouth with scissors, laughing at her and asking, "Who will think you're pretty now?" She supposedly approaches her victims and asks them if they think she's pretty. Whether or not she kills them—or just cuts their mouths to match hers—depends on the answer given.

The Faceless/Altered Woman frightens because she represents a loss of identity. Noppera-bo or mujina represents the awareness that we may be ignored, or that our



sense of self will be watered down (consider the person who had a passion for dance but had to give it all up, or the formerly diversified person whose entire existence is now predicated only on his or her spouse). Similarly, the Slit-Mouthed Woman is scary because it is about the loss of another aspect of our identity: we can be young and beautiful, but life or illness takes its toll. In other words, we age; in a more extreme context, consider the beauty queen who needs face surgery following an accident: her sense of who she is and what she could do has now been altered due to circumstances beyond her control.

The Vengeful Spirit

Thanks to the popularity of Suzuki's Ring and its American counterparts, this is the stringy-haired specter who comes to mind when we think vengeance. She's based on the Japanese revenant onryou, one who seeks revenge because she was wronged by a man. Just about every culture has female wraiths hell-bent on retribution. Hindu folklore has the churel (pronounced choo-dale, although she is called by many other names), a woman who dies during menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, or due to her relatives' neglect; she rises from the grave to suck the blood of her kin. The Venezuelans have La Sayona, who kills adulterous men. In Scandinavian lore there is the mare, who sits on a man's chest at night and gives him sleep paralysis or nightmares; while there's little evidence to suggest she is an instrument of justice, her roots have been traced to a story in which an angry queen summoned a devil to kill her womanizing king in his sleep.

Each of us carries an inner dread that we may someday be punished for the injustices we've done. The idea that something could manifest itself and attack us in retaliation for those deeds—whether we committed them knowingly or not—is alarming.

The Wailing Woman

Many towns, especially in America, have "White Ladies"—most of who are wandering and crying because they're grieving a dead loved one. The most famous—and dangerous—is La Llorona.

The story goes that she murdered her children by drowning them in a river so she could be with her lover (he hated children or didn't want to take responsibility for them, it depends on which version you read). The lover, however, spurned her, and she drowned herself. It's said she wanders the riverbanks, weeping, wailing—and looking for children to snatch to replace her dead ones. While her roots are most definitely in Mexico, there are versions of her in many South American legends and in the American Southwest—especially in San Antonio, home to a place called Woman Hollering Creek.

The presence of these ghosts suggests a very bleak eternity: they perpetrate the idea that when someone we love dies, we may never move on to find happiness. Grieving a loved one can be the darkest time of any life. It's bone-chilling to think we'll be sad for eternity.

The Lost Soul

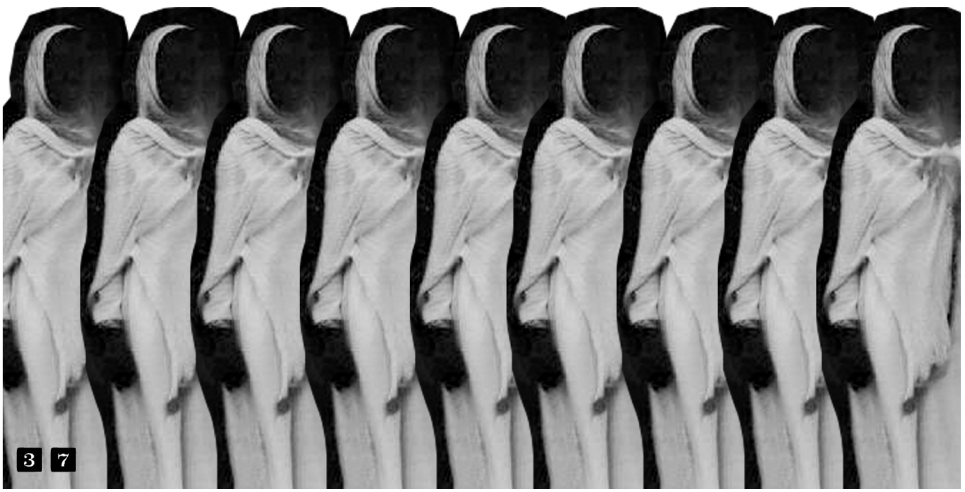


These popular phantoms are usually the product of suicide or victimization. My favorite tale is that of the Adirondacks' Lady in the Lake. In 1963, a mannequin-like body was discovered at the base of Pulpit Rock, deep under the surface of New York's Lake Placid. She was later identified as Anna Mabel Smith Douglass, who went rowing in 1933 and was never seen again. I don't think the reason for her death has ever been pinpointed with certainty, although these days people speculate it may have been suicide. Either way, residents say you can often see her spirit, hovering above Pulpit Rock, looking distant and forlorn. Canada has its Headless Nun, who had her head chopped off in an encounter with some undesirables (again, it depends on which version you read) while she was on her way to a convent in the great north. She spends her nights wandering about, searching for her head.

A third type of lost soul can be connected to punishment. Buddhist traditions have preta ("hungry ghosts")—famine-stricken beings who are being punished for their greed in a past life by being made to wander the earth in a state of constant, insatiable hunger and unquenchable thirst. Preta, however, aren't necessarily female.

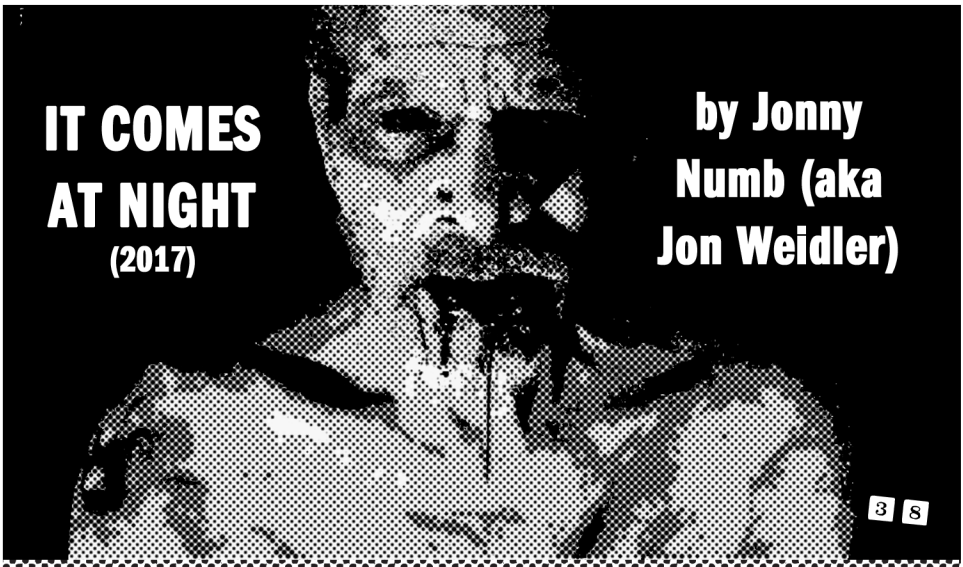
There's probably nothing more unnerving than thinking you may spend the rest of your earth-bound allotment in despair. These spirits remind us that there could very well come a time in our lives when our bodies have many years left—and so do our broken hearts.

Kristi Petersen Schoonover loves reading ghost stories as much as she loves writing them. Her short fiction has been featured in several magazines and anthologies; Dark Alley Press published her novel, Bad Apple, in 2012, and a novelette, "This Poisoned Ground," in 2014. She holds an MFA from Goddard College, is the recipient of three Norman Mailer Writers Colony residencies, and is a co-host on the Dark Discussions podcast. Find out more at http://www.kristipetersenschoonover.com/.



IT COMES AT NIGHT
(2017)

by Jonny Numb (aka Jon Weidler)



[91 minutes. R. Director: Trey Edward Shults]

I like films that are vague and subtle, and unwrapping their sub-textual enigmas and themes like Christmas presents. Recent examples I've loved immensely include UNDER THE SKIN, THE NEON DEMON, and THE BLACKCOAT'S DAUGHTER. They share ill-defined characters and scenarios that frustrate and fascinate in equal measure, but reward viewers prepared to draw their own conclusions.

Following that logic, I should love something like IT COMES AT NIGHT...but I don't. This is a film where dangling story threads and unfulfilled thematic potential are rendered with a total disregard for dramatic tension and narrative sense. At 91 minutes, it feels undercooked and unfinished. Like the recent SOUTHBOUND anthology, it also confuses gaps in the narrative with ambiguity and "mood."

Writer-director Trey Edward Shults aspires to be Jonathan Glazer or Oz Perkins, but this mechanical approximation of a story leaves the viewer with an emptiness that is neither thought-provoking nor cathartic. Films that aspire to be "cult classics" often fail, because they attempt to manufacture something earned through reputation and passage of time; a similar principle applies to art-house fare with cerebral aspirations.

Stop me if you've heard this one before: a family resides in a boarded-up home in the middle of the woods. We're led to believe there's been an outbreak of some sort – perhaps on a global scale – as our initial images of the family are obfuscated by gasmasks and muffled dialog. The grandfather of the house, stricken and physically depleted, is taken to the woods, shot, and incinerated in a ditch. Soon after, a desperate man breaks into the house, and tensions raise as characters determine whom they can or cannot trust.

If something like UNDER THE SKIN or THE NEON DEMON tried your patience, you'll be well

well past pissed by the time NIGHT reaches its conclusion. The final image, meant to be profound, instead comes off as just another cog of frustration in this rickety machine. Is it meant to say, "well, that's it!" or "well, that's what you get"? Whatever Shults was aiming for, he missed.

In all fairness, the "outbreak" subgenre still has the potential to surprise and stun. Ditto the coming-of-age story, which is consistently reinventing itself. Many great scripts allow actors to explore old emotions in interesting new ways. NIGHT breathes no new life into either subgenre.

When Jordan Peele's GET OUT applied a battering ram to social mores, political correctness, and race relations in the United States, there was an element of on-the-nose necessity that contributed to its critical and commercial success. Despite its interest in depicting racially mixed families, NIGHT never does anything interesting with this angle – the actors are fine, but Shults seems to be utilizing this only to play an empty "diversity" card. The only sliver of commentary I could extract was the generally unquestioning obedience of wife Sarah (Carmen Ejogo – ALIEN: COVENANT) and nightmare-plagued son Travis (Kelvin Harrison Jr.), hearkening back to the days of indentured servitude. As it stands, the scattered moments of tension owe more to the actors' commitment to the underdeveloped script than any buried thematic depth.

NIGHT cherry-picks plot and character elements from Jeff Nichols' TAKE SHELTER and Patricia Rozema's underseen INTO THE FOREST, but does nothing interesting with them. By comparison, those films are intellectually stimulating, devastating, and innovative takes on the apocalyptic subgenre that NIGHT fails so completely to achieve.
Maybe the long corridor and ominous red door that separates the family from the outside world is hugely symbolic of something-or-other, but I really got nothing. A summary of NIGHT could read as follows: "Stuff happens. Stuff isn't explained. People die." Nothing new here.

Jonny Numb's Rating:
2 out of 5 stars

Find Jonny at Twitter:
@jonnynumb





TREBOR (Robert Shive) from Way Out
WCIA, Channel 3 (Champaign, Illinois)
c. 1963-1965

CONFESSIONS OF A SEXAGENARIAN HORROR FAN

by Michael E. Wilson

That's not nearly as carnal, or creepy, as it sounds.

In less pretentious language it means I am 66 years old and have been happily obsessed with horror flicks ever since I learned to be afraid of the dark.

You might say my fascination with horror movies is genetic. My mother loved telling stories about what it was like growing up in England in the 1930s and going to see all of the American monster movies, DRACULA, FRANKENSTEIN, THE MUMMY, etc., that were imported overseas. Her eyes would sparkle with delight as she recalled walking home in the dark streets of Preston, Lancashire and expecting Bela Lugosi or Boris Karloff to be waiting around the next corner, prompting her and her friends to run rather than walk.. She made being scared sound like it was the most fun thing in the world. Her enthusiasm for horror became a family activity in the 1950s as we went to the theaters to see HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL (1958), THE BAT (1958) and THE TINGLER (1959), all starring Vincent Price. I was just seven years old in 1958 and watching these classic movies must have rearranged something in my brain, because in no time at all, I was hooked.

Seeing THE TINGLER during its first run in theaters was the most memorable of experiences. The film's producer, William Castle, was the king of gimmick cinema, a genre he basically invented all by himself. Castle found ingenious, entertaining ways to involve the audience when they watched his pictures. For HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL he had equipped some theaters with a



plastic skeleton attached to a wire reaching from the screen to the back of the theater. Said skeleton would slide over the audience at a key moment in the movie. Mr. Castle labeled this particular stunt "Emergo". For THE TINGLER he went for a more visceral reaction. At some theaters there were electric wires attached to some of the seats. When the titular monster would appear on the screen these special seats would be given a slight shock, scaring the wits out of the poor patrons. This cool idea was labeled "Percepto". Most of these gimmicks were probably done in theaters around Hollywood. It is highly unlikely that those of us growing up in fly-over country (Danville, Illinois, in my case) would have the opportunity to get wired with Percepto. But my mother swore up and down that her seat at the Fischer Theater was indeed wired. Who knows? Maybe she was right. Or maybe she was just "wired" all by herself. Whatever the case, she loved it!

While all of this mayhem was going on in theaters, television was beginning to show old horror and science fiction movies, everything from the Universal classics to the not-quite-so-classic B movies made for studios like Monogram. Most of these were shown late at night on Friday or Saturday. Some of these shows featured horror hosts who would wear creepy costumes and introduce the movies and perform comedy skits that added to the fun. One of these shows was called Terror Theater which was broadcast on Channel 10 from Terre Haute, Indiana. Back in those days before cable TV we were only able to get this channel if the wind happened to be blowing in the right direction. One night, probably in 1959 or 1960, after my sister and I had just gone to bed, my mother asked us if we wanted to get up and see a really scary movie, SON OF DRACULA (1943). Was she kidding? Of course we did!! We jumped out of bed and ran to the B & W 21-inch console TV just in time to watch the opening credits. The sparkling Universal globe turned around, accompanied by the music that would become so lovingly familiar to me. A UNIVERSAL PICTURE!!! And then, the screen was filled with cobwebs that were brushed aside by a pair of ghostly hands, and the film's title appeared. I will never, ever forget the feeling I had when I saw those hands! Even today, although I've seen SON OF DRACULA so many times, I can still be thrilled by those opening credits.

This is where my fascination with all things horror truly began. In the early 1960s there was a horror host show produced by WCIA-TV, Channel 3 in Champaign, Illinois. The show was called Way Out and the host's name was Trebor. It came on every Thursday night at 10:30 PM. Much too late for a school night. But my mother knew how much it meant to me to be able to see these old movies, so she allowed me to stay up. And she watched them with me. Way Out showed just about everything. All of the Universal classics and movies from other studios as well. I soon began to see the difference between the Bela Lugosi from DRACULA (1931) and the Bela Lugosi from programmers like THE INVISIBLE

GHOST (1941) or THE BOWERY AT MIDNIGHT (1942). But I loved them all. Way Out also showed all the great sci-fi movies from the 1950s, like THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL and THEM! And they showed fairly recent low budget gems like MISSLE TO THE MOON, SHE DEMONS and FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER, (all 1958).

This was a golden time in movie history to be a horror fan. Actors now known only as legends, such as Boris Karloff, Vincent Price, Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing, were all alive and well and busy turning out quality films from studios like American-International Pictures and Hammer Films. While I didn't get a chance to see all of these films during their first run at the theaters, I often was able to catch them when they were re-released. But most of them I saw on television in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One movie I was able to go and see on the big screen was THE INNOCENTS in 1961, considered to be one of the greatest ghost stories ever put on film. Even at the tender age of 10 I was able to sense the psychological weirdness in this very adult film. Movies like this were supposedly not intended for children, but we got in to see them anyway. Apparently, someone wasn't paying close attention!



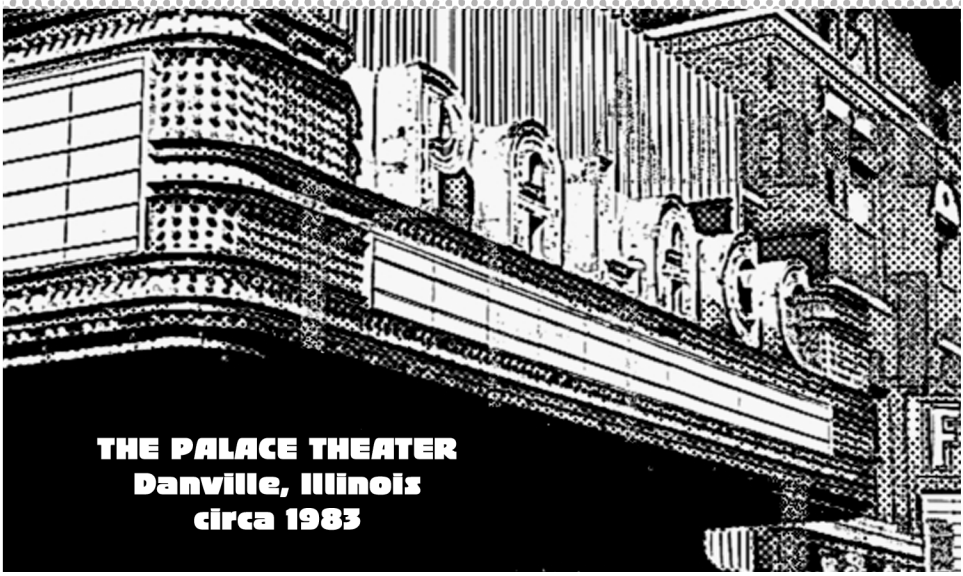
Another horror film came out in 1961 that I didn't get to see, something called BLACK SUNDAY. My sister, who was three years older than me, did go see it with friends. When she came home she was still so shaken up by the movie that she stood in the kitchen telling the entire story to my mother, who was also standing up and shaking with glorious fright along with her daughter! I was listening from the next room as my sister described the beautiful, scary witch with the long, black hair and strange, piercing eyes, and how evil she was. When I soon began reading monster magazines like Famous Monsters of Filmlanad, Horror Monsters and Castle of Frankenstein, I discovered this scary lady's name was Barbara Steele. I learned from the magazines that not only was she the star of BLACK SUNDAY, but she was also in THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM (1961), working alongside Vincent Price, a movie I had missed. I didn't see her on the screen until 1964 in a film entitled CASTLE OF BLOOD, which was on a double bill with HERCULES IN THE HAUNTED WORLD (1963), featuring Christopher Lee. This was a typical Saturday matinee at the Palace Theater in Danville. It cost fifty cents for two movies and some cartoons and the place was jammed wall to wall with kids and teenagers, all talking constantly and throwing popcorn at each other. But I was there to see Barbara



Steele for the first time. I was focused! When she first appeared in CASTLE OF BLOOD, it was in a close-up of her face in all of its black & white Gothic glory. I was mesmerized by this incredible actress and still am to this day. I finally got to see BLACK SUNDAY sometime in the 1070s, and a few of her other films as well. All these decades later, Miss Steele, now 78, is the last remaining horror star from that wonderful era of the 1960s.

Over the years my interest in horror movies subsided quite a bit. I eventually threw out all the monster mags I had collected. And in the 1970s I went to see less horror movies as the tendency toward violence and gore was on the upswing. It wasn't until the era of the video cassette that my old enthusiasm began to return. And then with the advent of DVDs and the release of the Universal films I was right back where I was when I was a kid. I hadn't seen those old Karloff and Lugosi flicks for decades and was now watching them with mature eyes and perceptions. And in remastered, commercial free condition!! The feverish collecting began. And there is no end in sight. Also the books! And the new crop of monster mags like Scary Monsters! It goes on!

In 2011 I went to my first Horror Hound convention in Indianapolis. My mission? To meet Barbara Steele. I was able to sit down with this marvelous woman for a few minutes and chat with her while she autographed a photo for me. "To Michael...." Then she drew a little heart symbol before signing her name. As she did this, she looked at me and gave me a warm, friendly smile. I gazed into her eyes and was mesmerized once again. It was just like being transported back to the Palace Theater in 1964.





THE SATANIST-

Directed by: Zoltan G. Spencer

Film Review by Danni Winn

I had the immense pleasure of obtaining tickets to a screening of Zoltan Spencer's ultra obscure 1968 sexploitation film, The Satanist, previously thought lost for decades. Thanks to Alamo Drafthouse and the American Genre Film Archive (AGFA), this newly found and extremely rough 35mm cut was available to experience in all its black and white glory. Even genre/obscure film expert and host Joe Ziemba—art director and programmer for the Alamo Drafthouse and creator of BleedingSkull.com—had not yet seen the film, explaining that we'd all be watching it for the first time together.

The Satanist is about a young couple's marriage that becomes threatened when an attractive female occultist enters their lives, enticing them into a strange world of drugs, sex, and satanic rites. Each reel of the viewing I attended was about 20 minutes long, with some damage to the sound on the third reel and damage to the picture quality in parts of the first and

second reels. However, that didn't seem to phase the crowd or dampen anyone's enjoyment of this newly discovered film treasure.

The film begins with a prologue informing us that "the events of this film are based upon annals of witchcraft as practiced in ancient times...and today." We then get a strange introduction with a man very much resembling Doctor Scott from The Rocky Horror Picture Show, explaining he recently had a 'nervous breakdown'. Now when I say say resembles, I mean REALLY resembles- complete with smoking pipe, wheelchair, and a blanket over his lap. He explains, "Perhaps I am mad. Maybe you can help me decide whether my story happened or is the product of an incurably sick mind."

The story starts with an intimate revelation into a couple's love life, the Doctor Scott lookalike (yet to be wheelchair bound) and his wife. It is complete with horrible porn music in the background and the uncomfortable feel of lovemaking without love. However, it's still well shot despite the time of filming and grainy celluloid. The man's voiceover continues to tell us that, after his breakdown, his doctor ordered him to stop working (he's a writer and can't help but sneak time with his typewriter) and to avoid a strenuous social life. Thus, the couple makes the decision to move to the country so that he can recover from his breakdown.

The crux of the tale really begins with an accident involving the couple in their car and a very attractive female neighbor on her bicycle. After the accident, the neighbor invites the couple back to



her apartment. The couple immediately concern themselves with the manner in which she has decorated her apartment—strange and vaguely occult statues, books and paintings adorn her humble abode.

The neighbor seems to attempt a friendly gesture, letting the husband borrow a book from her collection. He is intrigued by the small black leather bound book and begins reading excerpts from the book later that evening. According to the book, the carnal pleasures of Man are the most simplest and base, but also the most truthful. Modern society has denied the need of certain fundamentals of life, deeming them as Evil and reprehensible. "Why deny who you really are?" asks the author of the book.

Obviously, this puts some strange thoughts into the man's head. Later, he wanders over to the sexy neighbor's house and peeks in the window, where he sees her performing a sex ritual with another woman. After reading more of the book, he begins to have strange and vivid sexual dreams. He vows to avoid all future contact with the neighbor, but his wife reminds him that they previously committed to having dinner at her house.

The evening of the dinner, the "innocent" couple are the guests of honor at a Satanic black mass. Both the husband and wife are drugged. The husband is forced to watch his wife engage in various sexual activities with other men, all donning the Satanic-like headdress of a goat. "May the Devil have the fruit of this embrace," they would all chant during these scenes.

I really don't want to say much more about the plot, in case any one else gets to experience this enjoyable film. It was dark, demented, and slightly cheesy. But, I honestly loved it. I think this was the first sexploitation film to include Satanism as a subtext. Information on the film is scarce. W.C. Meadows is credited as editor and Director of Photography, while Spencer is credited as writer and director.

The film is slow moving with minimal music and virtually no character dialogue (instead, we get the writer narrating the story in voiceover as the sole voice heard during the film). Despite being considered technologically obsolete at the time, the film's black and white photography is striking.

The screening I saw was from the only known existing 35mm print. It has not been screened for audiences since 1971 at the latest. There are probably no more than five prints of the film ever made. It was incredible witnessing this piece of film history. (Ed. note: Since this article's original publication, The Satanist has been released on Bluray)



A FIEND ON FILM REVIEWS

THE FIEND 'O' METER GIVES NO QUARTER TO JUNK FILMS...
RATINGS 7 OR HIGHER ARE DEFINITELY RECOMMENDED...
8, 9 & 10'S ARE MUST ADDS TO YOUR FILM COLLECTION!!

SINFUL (2006)

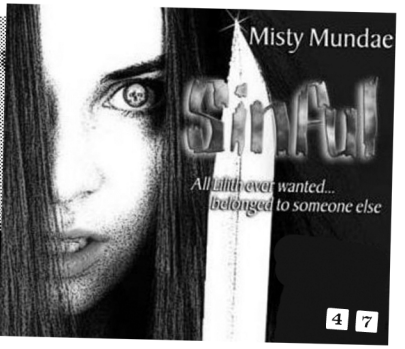
Total disclosure...I'm a massive fan of Misty Mundae aka Erin Brown, so any time I pick up a film of hers, I'm going to be a little nicer. Luckily in the the case of Sinful, a film directed Tony Marsiglia (who I believe has directed her in other films), is a pretty interesting mind fuck of a film. I mentioned in a one-line review of this, that it was akin to an "American Jean Rollin" film. Now most know, I really dislike most of that director's work but here the ethereal/surreal dream-like quality work, even with the obvious low budget they had. Even most of the "sets" and scenes have very minimal background which enhances the film's oddness.

Misty plays Lilith, a beautiful woman trapped in a loveless marriage who we find out only wants to have a child. The motivation is more because she comes from a wealthy family and everything was pretty much given to her. She wants something of her own. Now, other than the fact that her husband doesn't have sex with her, it seems that it might be she is infertile. She meets her next door neighbor, a woman who first appears to her stark naked, and they become friends. The neighbor is pregnant and a guttural jealousy develops within Lilith. This begins a mental breakdown that slowly causes her to not see thing clearly at all. Eventually, Lilith takes drastic actions to get her own "baby". Needless to say, it's not a bloodless journey.

Overall, I gave this film high marks. You never know what is real or not at anytime, or if it's real at all. There are extremely odd scenes that involve dead fetuses that lead you to believe that this entire film is a setup on the viewer. It ends like it begins, in the middle of story. I liked the acting and of course the upfront and unabashed nudity is not going to be ignored. I usually don't go for films like this but it did keep me watching.

FIEND 'O' METER says: 8/10





RED ANGEL (1966)

It's rare that I am totally blown away by a film anymore, but I have been making inroads to many older foreign films as of late that do just that. Red Angel is simply one of the most bleak and depressing war films ever made. In my mind, only Stalingrad from 1993 surpasses this.

A young nurse arrives on the battle front during the Japanese invasion of China, pre-WW2. She is surprised that things are not going well for the Japanese army there, because back home of course the government is lying to it's population. She is assigned to an army base, mostly for victims of shell shock though there are more extreme cases. She is raped her first night there and the rapist is sent back to front as punishment.

After this, the nurse gets transferred to a “real” hospital, where the main doctor there has to decide who lives or dies on a daily basis. The extreme nature of the place is dismal. Literally, arms and legs are sawed off and dumped into barrels. She first befriends a patient who has no arms and wants her to masturbate him. This leads into a very brief sexual affair that doesn't end well. The next step for her is falling in love with the main doctor, who because he is shooting morphine, can't perform in bed. It pretty much goes on like this until the climax of the film, an Alamo-like everyone that can hold a gun, battle decides the fate of much of the surviving battalion.

Shot in stark black and white, Red Angel just delivers the goods to fans of depressing movies and war films in general. I absolutely loved this and you should make a great effort to get a copy for your permanent film collection.

FIEND 'O' METER says: 10/10



SPECIAL EFFECTS (1984)

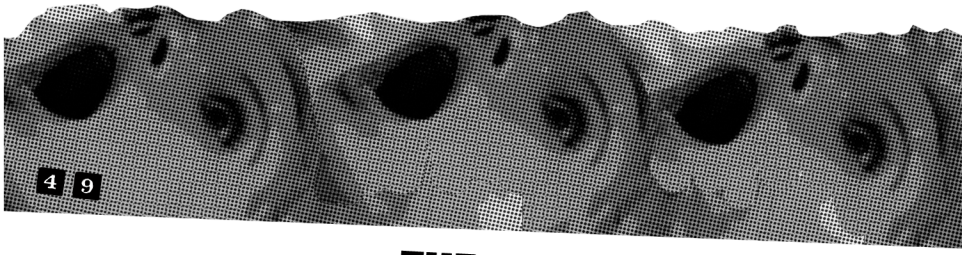
For some bizarre reason, this Larry Cohen film was never on my radar. He made so many films from the late 70's to the early 1980's that this one slipped through the cracks in my brain. Zoe Tamerlis (Lund), of MS .45 fame, stars as a young Midwestern woman trying to “make it” in NYC. By making it, it means having to go through the sleazy grind of the porn film and photography world. The opening sequence sets the stage. Zoe is sho-

ing all to a group of men, who paid money to take photos of her with their own cameras. It's so extremely low rent and sleazy beyond words. Her husband shows up in the middle of this and drags her back to her apartment. It appears she dumped him and the kid (married young and dumb) to live out her dreams. She bullshits him saying she got a casting call from a famous NYC director. The director, played by Eric Bogosian, is actually very famous but has just been dumped by the studios for losing a ton of money on a picture. Fast forward, Eric and Zoe gets together and he accidentally kills her (no spoiler, this is the whole plot of the film after 15 minutes) and he comes up with an idea that can save his career and pin the blame on somebody else, namely the dopey Midwestern husband.

Special Effects is a well crafted murder mystery/neo-noir that at times could have gone far off the rails into total confusion. Luckily, Cohen gets all the possible loose threads tied up. There is also a very creative way they get to have Zoe in the whole film. You have to hand it to Bogosian, he plays his character to the utmost sleazy, charismatic and narcissistic hilt. How he doesn't get caught from the first moments is pretty genius, all going back to creating a film within the film you are watching. And as a bonus to Tamerlis/Lund fans, she is not shy about being naked. I wasn't expecting that much flesh throughout the running time.

For me, this was an unexpected find. An excellent dark and dirty picture set in that sleaze town of NYC. Add this to your collection now!

FIEND 'O' METER says: 8/10



THE ISLE (2000)

I always have a love for film directors who just do not give a fuck. I have seen a few of Kim Ki-duk's films over the years and still have many to see. The ones that I have seen just blew my mind and The Isle is probably top of the list. What makes this film disturbing across the board is how unassuming the whole affair is. We are pretty much dropped into the middle of a story. There is a very attractive woman (who doesn't speak, if she is mute,

it is not entirely explained.) who runs a strange outdoor camping/fishing place. It's a lake with little "houses" on rafts anchored all over it. The only way to get in and out is by boat which this woman uses to transport everybody. You see her day to day is boring and mundane, she even sells her body for extra money/something to do (?). One day a strange man shows up, who background is revealed that something violent has happened in his past, and rents a cabin. She is attracted to him but for some bizarre reason, spurns his advances. This leads him to attack her violently. There are a group of prostitutes who are brought to the "isle" to service guests. One fancies the strange man and the lake lady gets "jealous" so to speak. Based on this woman's behavior we have previously seen, this cannot end well. Can it?

Basically, what I just wrote here is only one thread of this deceptively complex film. As I am watching, I know there are multiple themes going on, just not smart enough to "get it" the first time. It needs many viewings. One of the most unexpected things for me was how violent and depraved it got as it went on. There is much self mutilation, blood and violence, esp. towards animals which is going to put off many folks. You will be thinking "why" the whole time. It's dark, bleak....just the way I like it.



So of course, the Fiend gives this one a very high rating. No question, The Isle should be in your permanent collection...you will never look at fish hooks the same way. Ever.

FIEND 'O' METER says 9/10!

THE DEVIL'S FEAST (2007)

Sometimes there are films you kinda know what you are in for and then when the credits hit at the end, you realize it was something way unexpected. I am not familiar with the writer, but this film is based on the writings of Oniroku Dan "Japan's Master of Dark Erotica", as the DVD jacket dutifully states. If all his material is like this, then his mind goes into some extremely dark places.

The male lead is married, to a very beautiful wife, and has a high paying adverting job at a paper which has seen better days. They have one major

client, a strange new age temple, where it is rumored crazy cultist things are going on. The paper hires on a lady who immediately hooks herself onto the advertising guy. Of course, being a “guy”, he returns the attention given. It should be stated on the outset, he has an extremely beautiful and docile wife at home but he can't bring himself to have sex with her. This new woman bring excitement. When they are about to do it, she says she needs something a little extra to get her going. Out come some hand restraints for herself. Strangely it seems she can only have sex while being restrained in some manner. He finds this weird but that isn't going to stop him.

Of course, the lady has a secret agenda, she wants to use her position at the paper to discredit the “new age temple” place, as she used to go there but will not say what happened. The article gets published, which of course angers the the temple's owners, who then threaten the paper with pulling all their advertising. That of course would not be a good thing for all parties involved...so the paper's editor has an offer the temple cannot refuse.

When I started to watch this 67 minute film, I was actually put off by the slow pace in the beginning. Halfway through, the insanity & unbelievability ramps up so high. The sex, violence & debauchery creep up slowly and your eyeballs just cannot believe what is happening on screen. How they crammed so much of a well put together story in such a short space of time I don't know. You really have to check your head at the door for this one. It's dark and as bleak as they come...people who know me, know I live for this stuff. It's a must add to your film collection.

FIEND '0' METER says: 8/10





THE DEVIL'S FEAST
(2007)



THE TOOLBOX MURDERS (1978)

I know I may have seen bits of this film way back in the early VHS days but it was so long ago, I can't remember anything about it. Now seeing it with fresh eyes in 2017, I wonder to myself why it has taken this long to sit down with this near masterpiece of death. Right from the get go, there is a dude with a poorly put on ski mask and a large metal toolbox, entering apartments and killing the occupants. The death scenes are surprisingly nasty, Soon the police are called in but of course they cannot make heads or tails of it. We are introduced to some young teenagers, a brother and sister and a friend of theirs. The friend is a bit of an odd ball. The girl gets kidnapped by the killer and the movie turns into a mystery film with everyone searching for the girl. Who has her? Of course, we know but WHY?

The Toolbox Murders caught me off guard. I was expecting a low rent, nasty film. Instead I got a well done, nasty film with a professional air about the whole thing. Cameron Mitchell is revealed early on as the baddy and has one scene where he delivers a long monologue that has to be heard to be believed. Everything about the character is laid out in that scene and it is pretty amazing. Everything else about the film is top notch, well shot and great gore effects and a true sense of “killing”, it's real. I had to put out the high rating for this one and was very happy I finally saw it!

FIEND 'O' METER says: 9/10

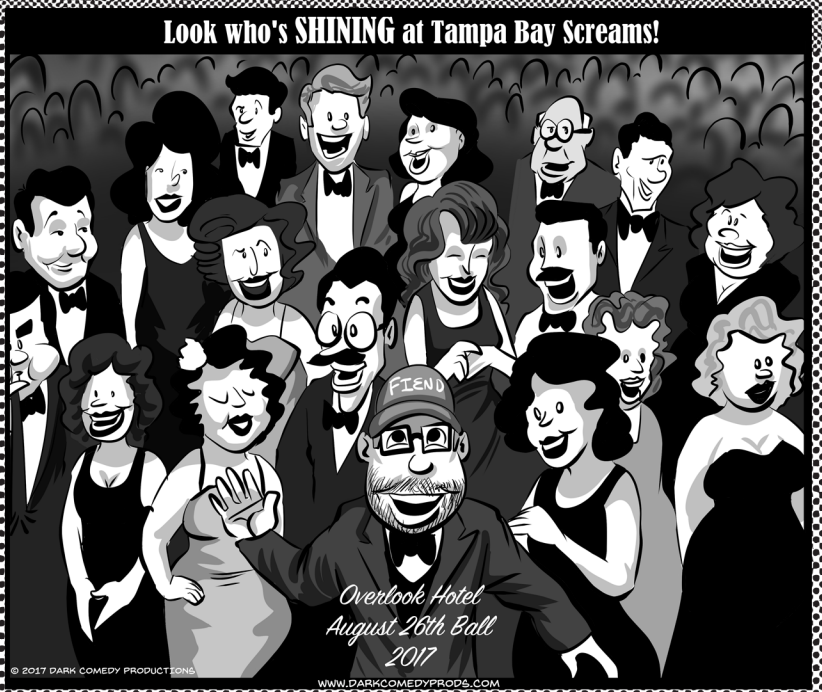
STRIP NUDE FOR YOUR KILLER! (1975)

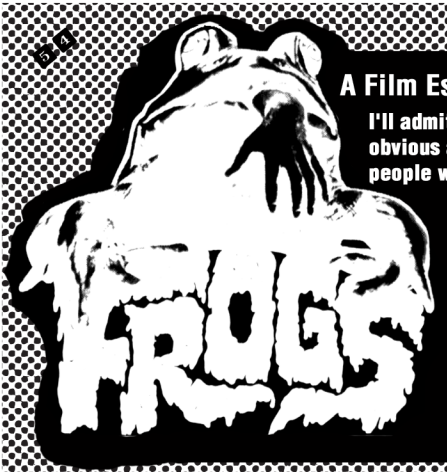
As I catch up with my unseen Blue Underground titles, I popped this disc in. Wondering if this famous Giallo would live up to it's namesake. Yes, yes it did. It really cracked me up that during the entire film that the women would get naked at the earliest opportunity, whether it was for her “killer” or not. The entire plot is centered around a modeling agency and someone has an axe to grind. Models start getting bumped off and the sleazy ass-main character, a male photographer with an eye for the ladies, looks into solving the mystery before they are all iced.

The whole film is actually pretty well put together and the women are gorgeous. This was the first time seeing Femi Benussi on screen...where the hell did they find her? The film is nudity, sex, death and some nice after kill

gore effects. The killer definitely had a great look (a tight leather motorcycle outfit, complete with a helmet, ALL BLACK) and “issues”. A decent film worth picking up for your collection. FIEND 'O' METER says: 7/10







A Film Essay by Bill Van Ryn of *GROOVY DOOM*

I'll admit I have unconventional taste in films--which is an obvious attempt to make myself sound cooler than the people who might say I like movies that suck. I don't deny that "Frogs" could actually be the most straightforwardly ridiculous movie that I adore, and if you don't believe me just go check out some of the comments left on the "Frogs" IMDB page. "Frogs" merits a meager 4.1 out of 10 rating, which isn't "Manos Hand of Fate" level, but still pretty low. Nevertheless, I love "Frogs" like a magnet loves your fridge, and I find it to be frightening and disturbing in a number of ways. Prepare to hear me out.

The setup: Sam Elliott (sporting the world's most noticeable trouser snake) is a "freelance wildlife photographer" named Pickett Smith. Through a boating mishap, he ends up at the island estate of Jason Crockett, played by a very cantankerous Ray Milland. A house full of guests allows for plenty of victims when the local wildlife starts to turn on human beings, somehow driven by an intelligence and understanding that they couldn't possibly possess. Gruesome death results: a hired hand is discovered dead, bitten by snakes. A man goes into a greenhouse and is followed by hordes of lizards, which knock over bottles of poison, creating a cloud of noxious gas that asphyxiates him. A woman dies after being hounded by reptiles and bitten by a rattlesnake. A woman gets stuck in the mud and is killed by an alligator snapping turtle. The death list grows!

It's hard to know what to do with a movie like "Frogs" today, since so many films have come after it that showed similar images. There was a time when a character's death really was enough to shock an exploitation audience, but "Frogs" stands apart from most films of its time for a simple reason: this 1972 film takes great pleasure in lingering on dead bodies, showing us a series of characters who have been brought to a disgusting, undignified death.

As a child, "Frogs" was the first time a film showed me gruesome death on screen, and it takes an approach to dying that isn't typical of other period films (excluding more underground gore films and "Night of the Living Dead"). I had seen characters in movies die before, but it was usually in a shootout or some other form of action that made it seem almost noble or glamorous. The people who die in "Frogs" do so most horribly. Although obviously the movie is unrealistic, if you accept the fact that it is unrealistic and look at what's really happening on screen, it is deeply unsettling. The victims in the film are indeed killed by harmless animals, but not only that, their deaths are unusually agonizing and drawn out.

Especially effective is the protracted stalking of Iris, a daffy lady who chases after a butterfly into the marshes, then gets cornered by a bunch of snakes

and lizards. The director isn't concerned with what is killing her, or how realistic her motivations are for wandering into the swamp alone with a butterfly net. The horror is not expected to come from the fact that a group of unintelligent animals could somehow work in unison to murder a human being. Rather, what's unsettling is how she gradually disintegrates, her fear causing her to lapse into animalistic appearance and behavior. Her hairstyle falls, ratted out by the vegetation she crawls through, making her look like a madwoman. Her clothing becomes filthy, and in the most excruciating moment, she trips and falls into a marshy pit of filthy water and emerges covered in leeches. Finally, completely demoralized, terrified, and drenched in silt and bloodied by the leeches, she is bitten by a rattler and very quickly dies. We see the moment of her death, and her corpse turns color to a deathly oxygen-deprived bluish hue right before our eyes. To me, this is one of the most horrifying deaths in horror movie history, even if it's also one of the most stupid–check out the stand-in mannequin arm that the rattler really bites!



There's a disjointed feel to "Frogs" that the film's low budget and glaring continuity errors help to emphasize. There is a moment when Smith finds one of Crockett's employees dead, lying face-down in a marsh in an unnatural position, with snakes crawling over him. The actor playing the victim is moving ever so slightly, although we're not sure if he's breathing or if the snakes slithering around his neck are making it move. Then Smith rolls him over to face the camera, and we get a look at his face, horribly bloated and off-color. In a series of cuts that most likely represent bad continuity, his eyes go from tightly shut to a hideous, wide-open death stare. The "bad" cuts, however, lend a hallucinatory quality to the scene, and suggest something even more horrifying: although we saw him lying face down in a wet marsh and covered by reptiles, it seems as if he was still barely alive, languishing from the snake venom, and Smith arrived just in time to see the moment of his death. How horrible to end your life paralyzed by snake venom, lying there with them while they bite you and slither over you possessively. That open-eyed death mask that his face becomes is probably the first image of a dead person that I ever saw in a horror movie, and it remains one of the most gruesome.

In another particularly outrageous and bizarre moment, a character accidentally shoots himself in the leg and, rendered immobile, is attacked by an army of tarantulas that descend from a nearby tree. An unexplained combination of vines and Spanish Moss begin to bind the man while the spiders bite him and cocoon him with webbing. As his struggling starts to slow and his death approaches, the last image of him is a horrifying one: his face, nearly buried in Spanish Moss, being covered with waves of spider webs. The movie tries to make some kind of overall statement about pollution of the environment, but it's these small images in "Frogs" that stick with you.

The humans in “Frogs” make it easy to root for the animals. Ray Milland's family of the “ugly rich” seem to take pride in their roles as exploiters and destroyers of both people and the environment. Frustrated by his inability to control the blooming frog population on his small private island, Milland has reacted by increasing the use of poison until all the local wildlife has been affected. His relatives are similarly reptilian in their disregard for ethics; Milland’s daughter, Holly Irving, complains that the family fortune has been slightly diminished because of costly environmental regulations forced on their factories. Irving’s husband, David Gillam, encourages his own son to engage in a fist fight; Milland’s grandson, Adam Roarke, is the most arrogant and aggressive character in the film, driving his speedboat while drunk, picking fights with other men in his family, and pathetically longing for the glory days of his youth when he was a football hero. Only Joan Van Ark manages to avoid the selfish pitfalls of her own family, projecting an innocence and sweetness that earns her a place as one of the film’s survivors. Elliott is a free-spirited, environmentally conscious photographer who gently tries to persuade Milland to mend his ways and exist in harmony with nature. Judy Pace’s character helps detail the social implications underneath the film’s surface; a spunky fashion model/designer who is dating one of the rich family’s sons, she brings a sense of social consciousness; she reminds the black servants of wealthy, white Milland that they have no need to be loyal to their employer when their lives are in danger. Her rejection of Milland is more in line with the rebellion of the animal life on the island, although it's suggested that she and the servants are attacked by seagulls while attempting to escape. We never see their bodies, just their bloody, abandoned luggage. I prefer to think they survived, perhaps injured, but alive.





The movie has a very strong atmosphere, thanks to some great cinematography and a bizarre electronic score by none other than Les Baxter. The settings are otherworldly at times, beautiful at others. If you can get past how far-fetched the movie is (and scores of sentient human beings cannot), the biggest liability is the acting, particularly by Ray Milland. He didn't like being in this silly movie, and apparently he was channeling this into his character. The director can't get what's necessary out of him, although it's too bad Milland couldn't see into the future and realize that he would appear in Amando De Ossorio's embarassing sock monster movie "The Sea Serpent". It may have helped him to take "Frogs" just a teensy bit more seriously.



The fact that Spanish Moss and vines don't move on their own doesn't really matter to me, because at heart, "Frogs" is a fantasy–a particularly lurid fantasy about the revulsion that many people have for animals of this kind. Spiders, snakes, insects, frogs, these are all things that make all kinds of people recoil in fear and disgust, and...why? There is no logic to that fear, because these things are generally harmless to human beings. "Frogs" is a fantasy about what the world would be like if our unfounded fears were reality. I don't know if "Frogs" would ever be considered a work of art by anybody, but I know that I like it.



The Dead Return on "The First 7th Night" (2009)

Review by Bill Meeker aka Texas's Frisco Kid

The 2009 Hong Kong film The First 7th Night — literally "First 7th" — was billed in the U.S. as a horror movie, but it is and it isn't. It is not a horror film in the Western tradition. Written by Zexin (also known as Yin-Yee Tin) and Herman Yau and directed by Yau, it is a blend of two Hong Kong genres, the triad/gangster and the ghost (or "gwei"). As a result, it is a drama on both the human and supernatural levels.

The title of the movie comes from the Chinese mythological (probably, and more specifically, Taoist) tradition that the spirit of a dead person takes 49 days, or 7 sets of 7 days, to make its journey to the Underworld, where it waits (and often suffers for its wrongdoing during its prior life on Earth) prior to reincarnation. On the night of the end of the first 7 days, the spirit "returns" to its living family members to take care of unfinished business, positive or negative. Sometimes these spirits become lost, so the gods Ox-Head and Horse-Face are often sent from the Underworld to act as guides and guardians through the seven weeks of the transition. My wife, who is from Hong Kong, told me that Chinese people often arrange for Taoist monks to say prayers to help the spirit to make its journey without complications.

Set in the present, the movie tells the story of "Map King" (Gordon Lam), a taxi driver who knows how to drive to many remote locations in the areas of China north of Hong Kong's New Territories. He is hired by "Pony" (Julian Cheung), a delivery van driver, to guide him and his van to a remote village called the Sun and the Moon. Pony wonders how Map King knows about the village, so along the way, Map King tells the story — his version at least — of how he knows about it. Thirty years ago, four thieves, on the run from the police after a robbery, came to the village and holed up in the Chun Lei (Spring Thunder) motel, which was owned by Fang (Michelle Ye). As it was the first 7th night after her husband's death, she had made the necessary preparations and was waiting at the motel with her young son for the return of her husband's spirit.

One of the thieves raped Fang, a crime for which he was punished in a gruesomely appropriate way by Fang's husband's ghost on its return. This event prompted a shootout among the thieves, which caused a fire that burned down the hotel. It is unknown whether Fang and her son survived the fire.

Pony then reveals that Map King's version of the story is not correct. He retells the story, casting a different light on Fang and the thief who allegedly raped her. When Pony and Map King arrive at the burned-out hotel, Map King realizes the real reasons why he knows about it and its village.



This film was rated as Category III in the Hong Kong system (which roughly corresponds to the R/NC-17 ratings in the US system) because it contains plenty of gruesome scenes of gore as well as sexual content. However, the story-line's main concern is with the mysterious nature of the identities of Pony, Map King, and Fang. The solution to this mystery lies in the realm of the supernatural, which Map King ultimately cannot avoid.

The First 7th Night's story was filmed and edited in such a way that it will keep the viewer guessing up to its very end. There are many loose ends to be tied up, but the film succeeds in doing so in a satisfying way. Rather than relying on special effects or CGI, director Lam chose to focus on the rising drama among the major characters. The acting is good — for example, gorehounds will appreciate the transformation of Fang's character from Map King's telling of her story to Pony's. Those who are used to the SFX makeup and visual and audio special effects of American horror movies, however, will be disappointed.

interview with
Philip Perron of the

HALLOWEEN BOUTIQUE PSYCHOTRONIC REVIEWS PODCAST

ARROW VIDEO
GRINDHOUSE RELEASING
SCREAM FACTORY

60



It feels that I have known Philip Perron forever now, been listening to him on his dark discussions podcast since almost the beginning. When I heard he was doing a solocast, I was all in. Philip graciously answered a few questions for this interview. -Dave K/A Fiend On Film

1) You are already a member of a long running genre podcast, along with a couple of other show specific ones. Why this one now?

Thanks David for this opportunity. Halloween Boutique Psychotronic Reviews podcast is a monthly podcast where I review, critique, and discuss in a historical context various midnight movies. Within the last few years many films that had either disappeared or were left in the public domain have suddenly been receiving new interest by cult movie fans. With such renewed notice, a number of folks, both superfans as well as award winning filmmakers, have opened up boutique label disc companies that have given obscure and in many cases forgotten films a proper and remastered release. With this new availability, I along with many others have been able to purchase and view some interesting films that generally weren't part of the Hollywood studio system. As noted by you, I do a number of podcasts where my co-hosts and I discuss a film weekly, but many of these newly rediscovered movies would never get a review or discussion on my other podcasts. With a large assortment of blu-rays and dvds that I own, I wanted to do mini audio reviews in the vain of such cult movie review sites as mondo-digital, dvddrive-in, rockshockpop, and others. That being the case I expanded my topical base to include not only horror films but also exploitation, foreign, small independent cinema, and genre arthouse films as well. Many of these boutique labels focus on guerilla style filmmakers, films that played on 42nd Street in New York, and weren't available to most during their original run. To clarify, examples of films that I have already reviewed include the films of horror and exploitation filmmaker Jess Franco from Spain, the epic exploitation film Camille 2000 by Radley Metzger, mismarketed cult films such as the Sybil Danning starring film They're Playing With Fire, as well as more recent films such as the 2017 Mexican apocalyptic film We Are the Flesh, and the 2007 film Viva by the highly acclaimed director Anna Biller. What all have in common is they are films that push boundaries and in many ways, even if made cheaply or for the exploitation crowd, include artistic flair or entertainment value that transcends their B-movie beginnings. As I say often on my main podcast, Dark Discussions Podcast, "we discuss intelligently about a genre that deserves intelligence."

2) How do you decide the blurays to talk about on your show?

Technically I discuss more than blu-rays because some films especially the SOV (shot-on-video) or those films that have had their master prints lost to history, may actually only have a dvd release given that an HD (High Definition) scan wouldn't be any improvement. Yet how I determine what to review is fairly unsystematic. The curious thing about boutique labels and the discs they release is that in many cases they do not own the rights to the films and instead are only leasing the rights. As a result, they have a deal in place where they get to print out anywhere between 1000 to 3000 copies. So in many cases I will purc-

chase new releases immediately so not to miss out on a new transfer that will soon be out of print. But that doesn't necessarily determine what I will review. Many times I will review a film because of the genre or subgenre itself. If I happen to be interested in watching a murder mystery, I will pull a few off the shelf and then pick the one that most pleases my fancy at that moment. Many of the films I review are actually not necessarily new releases. Prior to the creation of this podcast, I would watch some of these films and honestly had nowhere to talk about them. During the Dark Discussions Podcast we have a segment where we discuss what we've been watching, but it is short and I felt as if I wasn't able to give the attention I wanted to these movies. Now I can. But I do try to vary it up a bit. To be honest, watching horror continuously or grindhouse films back to back to back or any other subgenre can get very tiring and even at times feel like a chore. If I don't vary it up I will feel drained of any enjoyment. So one perfect example of a mix that I did was episode 4 of the podcast. This episode I reviewed a faux-sexploitation film, a shot-on-video foreign film, a brand new remastered release by Vinegar Syndrome, a cult classic, and an 80's thriller that had been marketed as a teen sex comedy. With that diversity of midnight movie viewing, I feel that I can focus on each film both during viewing and reviewing without feeling like I'm not giving the necessary attention that these films deserve.



3) Not so you have to pick just one, so give me two of your favorite boutique labels, your go tos and why?

That's a really great question. I know some folks who specifically love certain boutique labels more than others, and that is fair. They will gravitate to a specific label since that label may really put out some splendid great extras to go with the remastered film. I, however, am a bit different in my approach. I actually consider three things first. These include #1) the film #2) the print run and #3) have I seen it. So if the film is a dark drama or an interesting horror or exploitation film, it will immediately pique my interest. So the title and therefore the film itself is most important. Boutique discs at times can be more expensive than movies released by bigger labels so one really has to take care in their decision process of what to purchase. If the print run is short I try to grab it immediately unless the film just doesn't seem like something that will appeal to me. And if I have seen the film in a prior release, I will upgrade it if I know the film is something that I would love to see in a new fantastic presentation, however it may be something to avoid since the film was something I hadn't liked prior. With that stated, the one that I probably purchase the most of is Code Red because their print runs are fairly short. They are a small company out on the west coast of the United States. The films I seem to enjoy the most may be those released by Mondo Macabro (a British company) though their titles are not numerous. As a result I do find myself considering titles by Synapse, Severin, Raro, Arrow, and Vinegar Syndrome among others. The best release I've seen in the past two or three years though has been the Doctor Butcher, M.D. release by Severin. Not only is the film a damn good time, but the 2 disc set includes documentaries about the film, but also one about the entire marketing behind the film which itself was a fascinating tale, plus two versions of the movie and numerous interviews. But I have to give a nod to Something Weird video, another west coast company, that puts out some of the most wham-packed discs

you can get. But unfortunately they've slowed down over these last few years since the founder passed away from lung cancer. But their catalog is still solid and worth a look.

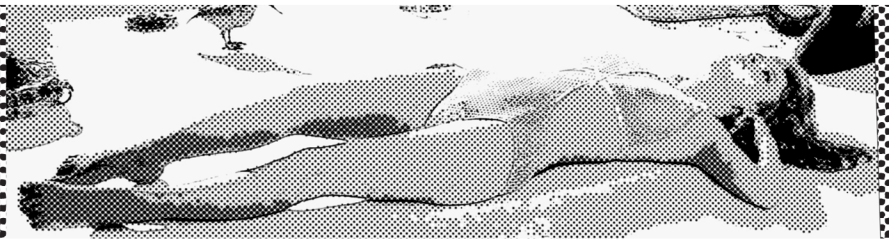
4) Do you think the market place is big enough to sustain these types of labels in coming years?

It could go two ways I think. Some think the media known as the disc will be something of the past in due course. If that happens, whether if all physical media disappears or if movies sold on thumb drives or another medium take over, these boutique labels will either die away or have to adjust. But to consider the companies themselves, without worrying about the possible change of media presentation, it is curious to think whether or not there are too many of them. There are only so many films, and also many of them are not getting a release because the owners of the films want a large fee. But boutique labels are honestly no bigger than the local pizza parlor in your hometown. They are really nothing more than mom-and-pop "shops" where many include no more than two or three employees who are really more fans than businessmen.

They aren't moneymakers by any means, and when they do make money, it is a long process and much of that goes back into the business. Plus to scan these films or pay outside parties to re-master them is a lengthy and expensive procedure. As a result, some solid companies like BCI/Eclipse and Subversive Cinema have folded up their figurative doors and gone the way of the dinosaurs. And the great review website eccentric-cinema did as well. But when out go the old, in come the new and such companies like Vinegar Syndrome popped up and Arrow crossed over the Atlantic from the UK to open up new markets. Curiously, Vinegar Syndrome even has expanded what they consider the definition of the "cult" film. They have now begun remastering classic adult "blue" cinema as part of their monthly releases as well. I myself won't review or purchase those since I have a family with two little girls, but at least it allows their company to find another niche of folks who are fans of films who therefore collect these movies. But honestly, the number one thing that determines whether or not a boutique label will stay in business is the owner's motivation to the label. If and when the work and cost to them is too costly and too lengthy, that determines whether the company will remain in business. And like many things, besides the passing of the owner of Something Weird Video, even being an owner of a cult cinema boutique label can sometimes turn a hobby into a chore, and when that happens, it ends.

5) What is your most favorite special feature or type of writing that is usually included in these editions?

Honestly the most important thing to me is the new HD transfer of the film. I'm sick and tired of watching some lousy copy of a movie. What I want is it to look new. It doesn't have to look perfect. If it was grimy and cheap when it was made, I just want it to look grimy and cheap but as it would have looked when it was first released. But with that stated, for specific extras or booklets that may come with these discs, I personally love the commentaries especially, followed closely by documentaries. If there is a surviving member of importance to the film, such as the screenwriter or director, it is splendid to listen to a commentary by those who made the film while actually watching the movie play. Like any commentary for any film, they are pretty informative and give us a lot of information of the mindset of the folks that worked on the film, along



with what they were doing in specific scenes. Also, film historian commentaries are great too. Many of the film historians are self learned and have done much research and give further detail that is generally unbiased and from a set of eyes that had nothing to do with the production. So in many ways they can even be more informative than cast and crew commentaries. But recently, the pre-made documentaries by the boutique labels have become the best part of most discs. These documentaries are actually made and produced by the boutique labels and for that specific release. To put such things together, to get the people coordinated to actually appear in the documentary, and to imagine the cost and time, these alone make the disc worth a look. And honestly they are top notch and some of the best documentaries I've ever seen. For example, the new release of the horror film Popcorn by the boutique label Synapse was fantastic and the documentary was actually filmed by those associated with Synapse. Vinegar Syndrome made a really great documentary for their release of Psycho Cop Returns. And no matter one's thoughts of the films, the documentaries are themselves worth the price of the disc.

6) It seems to me you are a big fan of the bluray format. If you are usually buying these discs, are you upgrading or do you only buy something you don't already have?

Yes, blu-rays I absolutely adore. Again this comes down to the fact that I want to see these lost and obscure films as if they were brand new and on the big screen. Since I enjoy watching great copies of Wes Craven's Scream or Nightmare on Elm Street, that also applies to other films too. I don't want to watch a beat up copy of something more obscure like Raw Force or The House on Sorority Row. And blu-rays and specifically boutique label companies give us all that option. Yet to answer your question, do I upgrade to the blu-ray format when a blu-ray comes out of a film I already own on dvd? Well, let me expand on that question. Would I buy a new edition of a film on blu-ray if I own an older copy that doesn't have all the extras and features of this new boutique release? To answer both questions, sometimes. The film and its remastered presentation is still the most important thing for me. If there is a movie that absolutely hits it out of the park for me, and a company suddenly comes out with a better edition or one that has extra features that will expand on the enjoyment I already have on it, then yes, I will most certainly upgrade. One recent example from 2016, the company Synapse released a special edition of the Dario Argento film Tenebrae. The edition I owned was the DVD version and had a handful of extras. But this new release was filled to the brim with extras including a full length documentary on the Giallo (or Italian slasher film) and a commentary by a Dario Argento historian. Plus, of course, this release included the best presentation of the film ever. Since the film is one of my favorite horror films, specifically because of the mystery subplot and the various exploitation elements, I upgraded without second thoughts. Yet fortunately for me, most copies of movies I have are close to being their best release so any further releases may not be something needed. I'm not necessarily a completist especially when it comes to extras.

7) Finally, are there any titles not yet released or upgraded to Blu-ray that you wish they would?

This is an ironic question for me. I'm late to the horror films from my lifetime. Though I've always been a fan of horror and genre films, most of them were the old Universal, Toho, Daiei, or Hammer films from by gone days that I watched as a young lad. So the films of the modern era (or what I'd call the rating system era) are new to me. It was because of Wes Craven's film, Scream, that I even noticed the modern horror film. The girl I was dating at the time wanted to see it and so we went. That film made me understand that modern horror films weren't just trashy b-movie nonsense. They actually had importance to pop culture and film history. Not that my parents were strict, but growing up as a teenager during the slasher craze and video store rental days, I was too young to see R-rated slashers at theaters, and I was unable to watch R-rated horror films on video cassette since we only had the one VCR in the main television room. So unless I saw them at a friend's house, I wasn't watching them. And honestly, they weren't things I even considered interesting either. And that is odd to me now that I look back since I did see a handful of R-rated horror films at a friend's home back then. I watched Night of the Living Dead, Return of the Living Dead, and I Spit on Your Grave at his house and each of them had their merits and should have sparked more interest for me. So everything that's been coming out or I've watched these last 8 years or so of podcasting is new to me.

That said there aren't many films I've been sitting and waiting for. They just appear and they are new to me. I do know that I've been waiting for releases of the late 1950's horror films, I Was a Teenage Werewolf and I Was a Teenage Frankenstein. I remember enjoying their run on television and would love to rewatch both. Also I've read that the film Blood Beach was an early 1980's horror film that folks have said they would love to see get a proper release. Another of note is the 1990 slasher film entitled Blood Games which would be one I'd like to see as well. The Hammer film starring Christopher Lee, Dracula A.D. 1972, would be another.

But many such as Repitilicus, The Angry Red Planet, Queen of Blood, and The Man From Planet X have all just gotten new releases by boutique labels. So unless the films are in courts where folks are fighting for ownership, many of them are slowly making their way to an HD remastering and therefore to everyone of us.



Check out the HBPSR podcast & his others at:

www.darkdiscussions.com



LUCKY SKY DIAMOND

(1990)

by Jesse Midnitekrawlr





I was browsing the internet one day searching for obscure films from Japan of the gore-fest variety when I happened to run across Lucky Sky Diamond (1990). A few screenshots and brief reviews intrigued me especially when I read it was an "unofficial" entry in the Japanese Guinea Pig series. Without any more delay I found access to the film, uncut with no English subtitles and a run time of 60 minutes.

The film begins with a female patient laying in a hospital bed writhing in a room filled with cameras and hospital equipment. Strobe lights begin flickering as a hypnotizing dread sets in she discovers her IV is feeding her a squirming worm concoction. The pipes in the room begin spewing blood, claustrophobia takes over and she begins to hallucinate that her innards are spilling out. A doctor and his female assistant rush into the room and inject her with a sedative and she passes out.

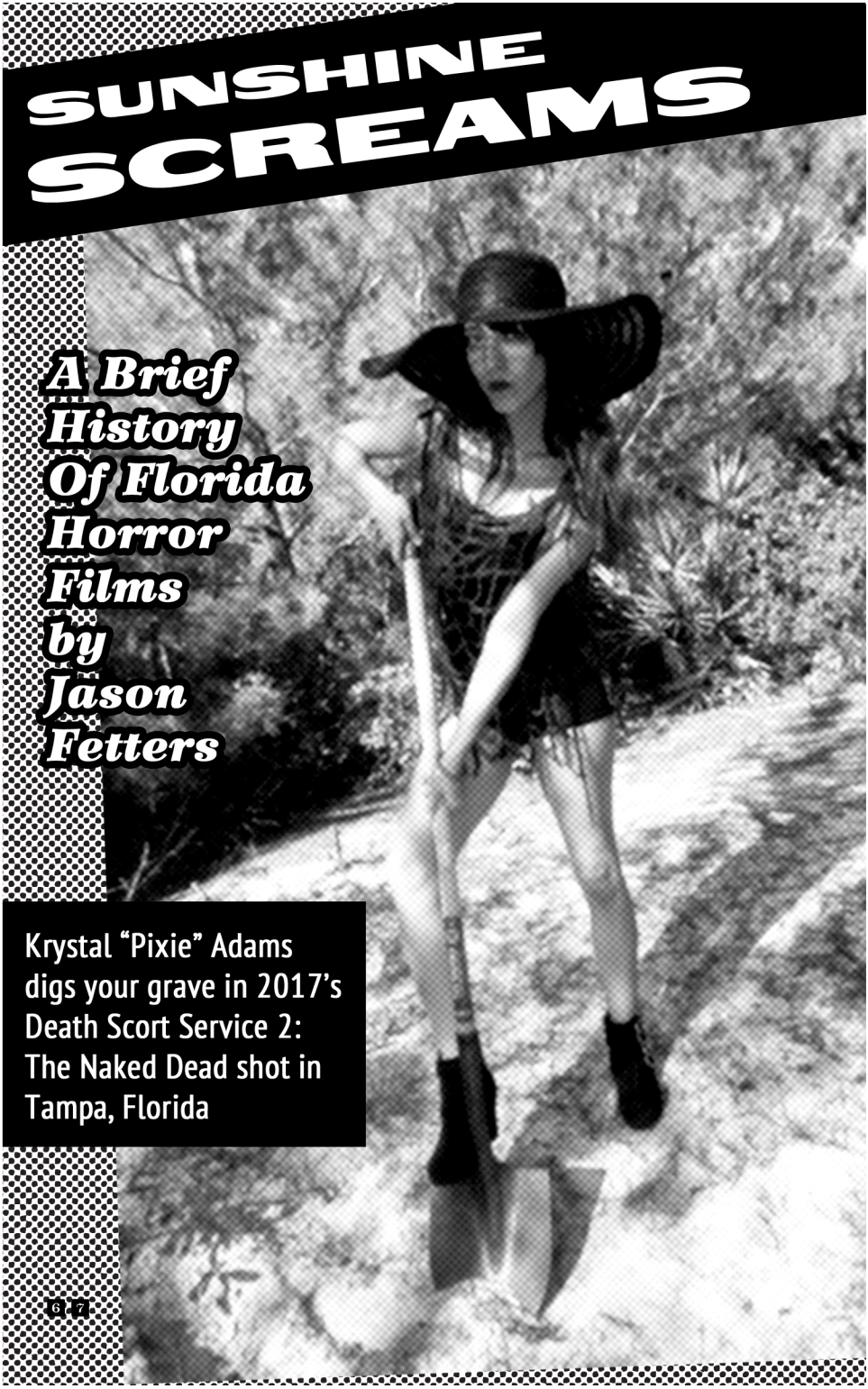
While the patient sleeps the doctor begins to kiss her and fondle her breast while the assistant watches via camera on a live feed. The depravity continues with a nightmarish shot of a cantaloupe filled with worms followed by the patient being prepped for brain surgery. As her skull is bone sawed open the doctor and assistant begin engaging in bizarre acts including fellatio while at the same time the doctor sexually fingers the patients exposed brain. The final 20 minutes is an orgy of scalpel stabbing, fondling of exposed intestines, urination, prolonged screaming, head bashing via hammer blows and self mutilation. After witnessing this demented plethora of craziness, I really can't make sense of anything I saw but that is the joy of this twisted madness.

This hour long mind fuck is directed by Izo Hashimoto who has 8 directorial credits including Evil Dead Trap 2. His screenplay credits are even more impressive having wrote a few of the Sukeban Deka live action movies and the screenplay to the anime classic Akira.

SUNSHINE SCREAMS

A Brief History Of Florida Horror Films

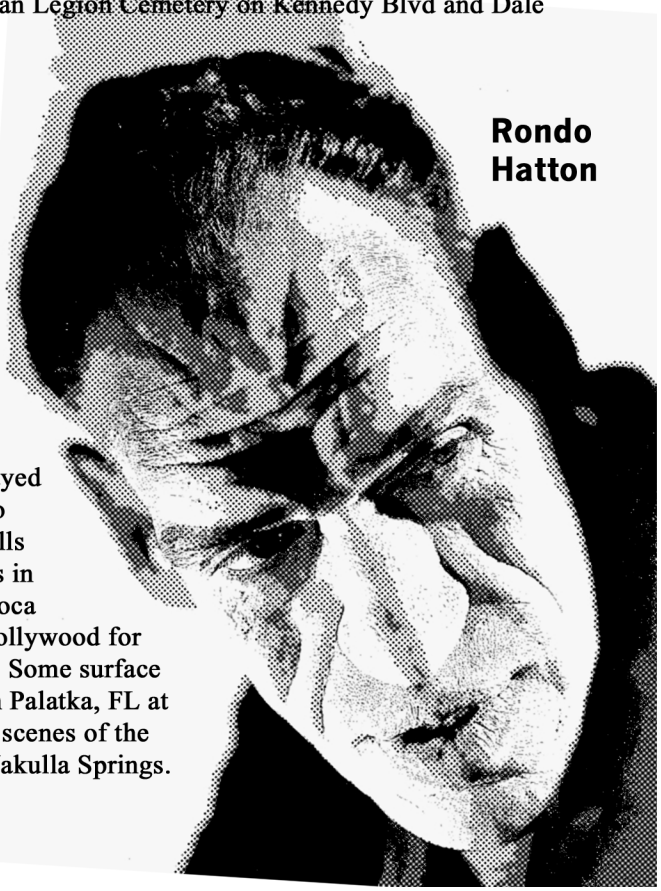
by Jason Fetters



Krystal "Pixie" Adams digs your grave in 2017's Death Scort Service 2: The Naked Dead shot in Tampa, Florida

Despite palm trees, sandy beaches, and oranges, Florida has always had a sinister darkside that is best reflected in cinema. With New Smyrna Beach earning the title Shark Attack Capitol of the World to gator attacks at Disney, something scary is brewing underneath the picturesque landscapes and relaxing sunsets when the dark descends and evil comes out to play.

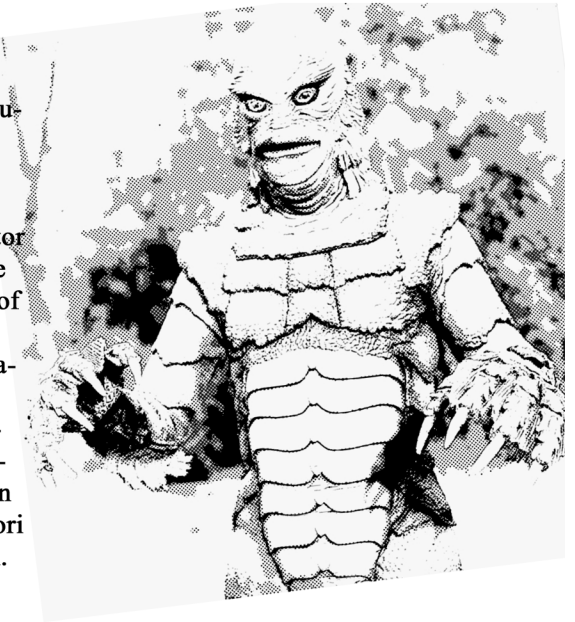
A high school student from Maryland moved to Hillsborough, Florida where he excelled in track and field and was once called the Handsomest Boy and sadly gradually over time he was stricken with acromegaly, a pituitary gland disorder that distorted his face so hideously that Rondo Hatton became one of Universal's earliest horror stars. Unlike Lon Chaney, Hatton never needed special makeup to distort his face. He was discovered by Henry King while working as a reporter for The Tampa Tribune. Rondo began his acting career in a bit part in Hell Harbor (1930.) He was mainly a supporting actor until Hollywood exploited his misshapen face and cast him in The Pearl of Death (1944,) a Sherlock Holmes movie where he played The Hoxton Creeper. He continued playing The Creeper in House of Horrors and The Brute Man. Sadly Rondo Hatton died at 51 due to a heart attack from acromegaly. His legacy continues with The Rondo Hatton Awards. Horror fans and film buffs can visit his grave in Tampa at The American Legion Cemetery on Kennedy Blvd and Dale Mabry.



Rondo Hatton

With Great White Sharks in the water, panthers roaming the forests, and giant gators terrorizing the swamps, Florida loves monsters. This is best showcased in Universal's horror classic, The Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954) that feature the Gill-man, played by Ricou Browning, who rules the Amazon and falls in love with Julia Adams in horrifying 3D. Florida locations were utilized by Hollywood for several water sequences. Some surface level filming was shot in Palatka, FL at Rice Creek. Underwater scenes of the Gill-man were shot at Wakulla Springs.

The Creature from the Black Lagoon was a box office hit for Universal that spawned two sequels.



Returning to the 3D format and the debut of the little known actor at that time, Clint Eastwood, the Gill-man returned for Revenge of the Creature. With Revenge extensive filming took place at Marineland of Florida, one of the first marine parks to have mammals such as dolphins. A restaurant called The Lobster House in Jacksonville were used when Lori Nelson is taken by the Gill-man. Florida's longest river, the St. Johns River, was shot as the Amazon. Revenge of the Creature just could not duplicate the success of the original. That is a real shame considering all the great scenes of Marineland, pre-Sea World, back when marine parks were beginning.

However, Revenge of the Creature is still a better movie than the third entry, The Creature Walks Among Us, a dreadful and boring waste shot at Wakulla Springs.

Moving from 50's creature features towards the revolutionary 60's, a low budget director from Pittsburgh shot his movie in Miami called Blood Feast and splatter was born. Herschell Gordon Lewis had debuted to party with blood, guts, and boobs. Tampa had a small part to play in this gory masterpiece when a sheep tongue's was sent to Miami for a scene involving a woman's tongue being ripped out. Blood Feast did a tremendous job getting folks to the drive-ins to see it.





Lewis followed up Blood Feast with Two Thousand Maniacs, a gruesome riff on Brigadoon. A group of fun loving Northern tourists venture out to the small town of Pleasant Valley. Little do they know that the crazy hillbillies and rednecks plan to torture and murder them. This time the splat happy carnage was filmed in St. Cloud, Florida, a town near Orlando. For Two Thousand Maniacs, most of the residents, agreed to be actors and eager to help. The crazy mayhem of Two Thousands Maniacs was another drive-in smash for Herschell Gordon Lewis.

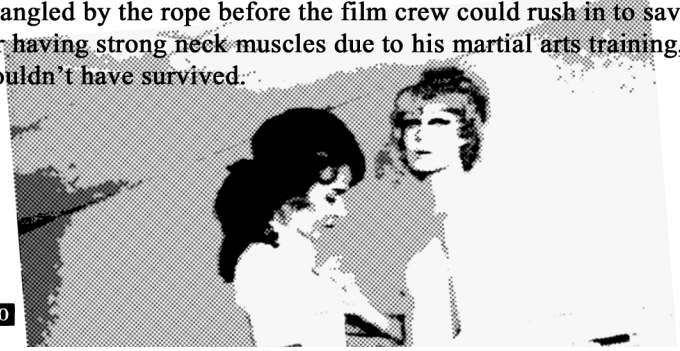
The final entry in Lewis' Blood Trilogy was Color Me Blood Red about a failing artist who can't sell his paintings at galleries until he uses human blood for paint. Color Me Blood Red was filmed in Sarasota in 1964 and it is a visual treat to see Sarasota caught on film in the 60's with cool cars and how store fronts used to look. Even if this movie is not your cup of tea, watch it for 60's Sarasota.



Herschell continued to direct his bloody epics, however a cinematic change was occurring that end the gleeful 60's for the gritty 70's and exploitation horror reigned.

I was born in Tampa in 1972 and I have often wondered how Tampa looked during my early years of growing up. Aside from looking at old photos in photo albums, there isn't really much to go by. So I was glad to find out the Impulse was filmed in Tampa and released in 1974. To me it is a visual treat and a staple of 70's horror.

Directed by William Grefe and starring the legendary fanboy hero, William Shatner, and Odd Job from Goldfinger, Harold Sakata, Impulse had talented actors. Impulse tells the strange story of Matt Stone, William Shatner, who catches his mom fooling around on the couch with a drunken boyfriend. This causes young Matt to flip out and to slash him with a Samurai sword. Matt grows up, somehow avoiding incarceration, and becomes a con man who tricks wealthy women out of their money and killing them off after. Matt has a run in with Karate Pete, Harold Sakata, that nearly killed Sakata. William Shatner used a rope to strangle Karate Pete and this scene took several takes to get it right. During one of the takes, something happened and Sakata was actually being strangled by the rope before the film crew could rush in to save him. If it wasn't for having strong neck muscles due to his martial arts training, Harold Sakata wouldn't have survived.





What I like about Impulse is seeing the drive down Bayshore Blvd with a wonderful view of Tampa Bay. There is a scene with William Shatner driving past the Bigelow Mansion near Gandy and Bayshore, This is an interesting tid bit as the Bigelow Mansion was long rumored to be haunted. You can see gorgeous shots along the Causeway. One shot shows Shatner driving on one of the beaches on the Causeway to get rid of a body. You can see several exterior and interior shots of storefronts that showcase 70's Tampa. Also not to be missed are the houses and filming that took place in Town and Country, a Tampa suburb.

Digging deeper into Florida's 70's horror scene is the wonderful Bob Clark. Before he captured everyone's heart with A Christmas Story and made us laugh with Porky's, Bob was directing horror.
Growing up in Fort Lauderdale, Bob Clark, got together with his good friend Alan Ormsby to film the horror classic, Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things (1973.) With a budget of $50,000 and using several friends who were drama students in Miami, Bob and his film crew shot in Coconut Grove, an old Miami neighborhood. They had to travel by boat to reach the island that served as the set location.



Bad tempted director Alan, played by Alan Ormsby, takes his actors to a small island where per legend the criminally insane are buried. They all stay in a quaint cottage until Alan performs an evil ritual that causes the dead to rise. Then the terrifying fun begins as weird zombies crawl their way through the dirt and chase down the actors. Children is a wonderful horror movie that shows that Bob Clark had a lot of talent.

Clark followed up Children with Deathdream about a Vietnam Vet who returns home and despite the warm and friendly homecoming something is not quite right and no one seems to know why. Filming took place just north of Tampa in Brooksville and included the 41 Drive-in. Bob Clark teamed up with special effects wizard, Tom Savini, and together they crafted one of the best horror movies about the Vietnam War.





Bob Clark next made Black Christmas that was filmed in Canada. It is probably his best liked horror movie but because there is no connection to Florida, I am only mentioning it.

Sadly, Bob moved on to other genres, I love his three early horror movies and those will remain my favorites from his body of work.

People got tired of waiting to pump gas in the 70's, Nixon/Watergate, and disco as the decade faded into the big 80's. Florida was still in the horror camp when director Tim Ritter, filmed Truth Or Dare?: A Critical Mass in Palm Beach. Ritter teamed up with Tampa Bay's King of the B Movies, Joel D. Wynkoop, for an acting role.

I remember renting Truth Or Dare when it came out in the mid 80's. I was in middle school at the time and a buddy and I saw the VHS cover and tripped out on it. It was a black background with a bloody blade with blood running down the words. Such sweet memories of youth. We ordered a pizza and popped it into the VCR.

I thought it was great. People daring each other to do crazy stuff. I will never forget the scene with the fat guy being dared to stick a grenade in his mouth with the pin pulled. He exploded in brilliant blood and guts glory with pieces flying in every direction. If you want to see a great horror movie from 1986, then check out Truth Or Dare.

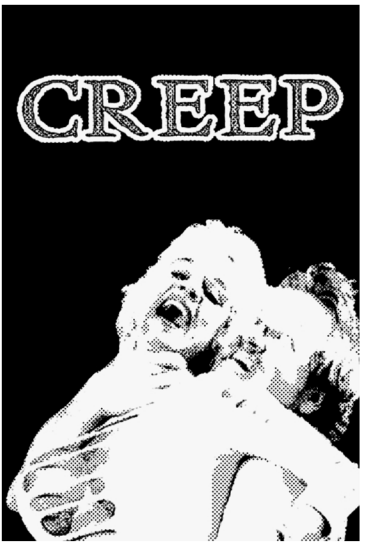




My next favorite Tim Ritter movie is Killing Spree (1987) where a young man suspects that his hot young wife is having affairs when he is at work. This because an obsession that costs him his job as he descends into insanity and that is when the fun begins.

He sets out on a killing spree to kill all those he suspects. But did they sleep with his wife or is it just his own paranoid fantasies? You need to see it yourself to decide. Killing Spree was shot in beautiful Jupiter, Florida.

The 80's ended and into the 90's, Tim Ritter was still going strong with Creep (1995.) Like Killing Spree, Creep was shot in Jupiter, as well as, West Palm Beach, and Fort Pierce, Florida.



Creep is a tour de force for Joel Wynkoop who plays a psycho who manages to escape and he seeks out his sister. Together they team up for murder and mayhem, with a police captain hot on their trail. Some cool gore effects make Creep a winner that horror fans need to see.



So in this final part, the 2000's, Florida is still blood drenched with intestines cooking under the hot sun. Enter the indies horror show with Director Sean Donohue who makes great use of Tampa in Death-Scort Service, with the help of local talent, tells the sick tale of call girls being slaughtered by a crazy weirdo with a grudge. You can pick up a copy at Grindhouse Video Tampa in the shopping plaza on Martin Luther King Jr Blvd and North Blvd, be sure to say hello to Mike, he doesn't usually bite.

Another Tampa indie director to take note of is Chris Woods. Chris and I used to write together for the defunct webzine called Crazed Fanboy. I remember seeing an early short film that Chris wrote and directed called Spaventare about a woman all alone in her apartment who receives a creepy email and someone might just be in her apartment with her. Spaventare convinced me to keep an eye on Chris Woods.

Chris also directed the cult hit Amerika Holokaust and more recently, Chaos AD, about a strange group who kidnaps folks for torture and death.



As you can see in this article, Florida has a long and rich horror tradition that still continues to breath new life into the horror genre today. Many lament the good old days of New York's 70's grindhouse days but the twisted Southern Grindhouse is alive and well and still churning out the good stuff. Especially in Tampa where something sinister is always brewing.



What The Peeper Saw (1971) Film Thoughts by Kara Grimoire

Directed by: James Kelly Starring: Britt Ekland, Hardy Krüger, Mark Lester

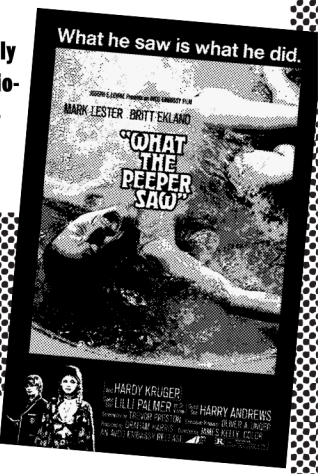


Elise, the second wife of Paul, a well-known author, begins to suspect that her 12-year-old stepson Marcus murdered his mother, who is said to have passed away from a heart attack.

My Thoughts: The film has a Gialloesque Hitchcock-like quality to it. We follow along with the story of Elise, a woman who is half the age of her husband. She deals with scrutiny from family friends as well as from her stepson. Elise cannot seem to get a straight answer from her husband Paul or stepson Marcus in regards to the death of Sarah, Paul's first wife.

It is also obvious Marcus is sexually interested in Elise and wants her for himself. He is intellectually mature for a twelve-year-old, and it is also clear that he is emotionally disturbed. The situation is so well crafted by Marcus, that practically everyone is eating out of his hands and taking his word over Elise. At this rate, it isn't long before Elise is hospitalized. By the end, both stepmother and stepson seem to have reached an understanding, and then the double cross.

I've always preferred older films regardless of genre and I really did enjoy the Hitchcock-like feel to this film. Granted it is obvious who was responsible for the death of Sarah, but the real journey is not in the how or why, but rather what happens afterward.



Death Bed : The Bed That Eats (1977)

Directed by George Barry

Review by Joey LugOsi

7/5

Never disclosed of its origin , the "death bed" is a water bed adorned with an elaborately carved headboard and canopy dressed with heavy flamboyant fabrics fit for a king. The Bed is kept in a single room stone building adjacent to an abandoned estate. All weary travelers, in typical b movie fashion, stumble upon the small stone building and meet death...bed.

A wickedly bizarre film where the bed moans if hurt or hungry and utilizes it's bedsheets to trap it prey - one sequence shows deathbed maneuvering the sheets, catching a running victim.

The death sequences are all images of prop limbs dissolving in a yellow formaldehyde-esque liquid which implies the death beds inner composition. Typical 70's horror thick paint blood which most likely were afforded from the Hammer horror set yard sales.

The score, although rarely called upon, carries a very dreadful -aristocratic sound, ideal for this setting. In my non-forgiving opinion, if this film utilized more of that Jim Viola/Tom Sherry score per death scene, this film would've definitely scored multiple rotations however somebody fucked up in that department. The visuals and character interactions were sufficient enough to keep things moving.

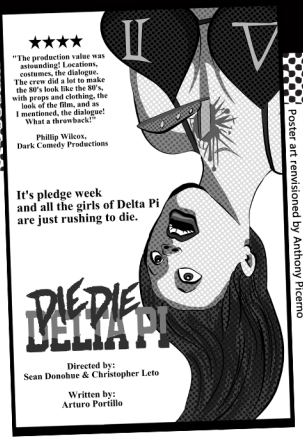
Albeit not much of a novel worthy plot, this fuckfest had me more intrigued to see what the bed had in store for the next set of permiscuous infidels.

Overall this low budget , under the radar film was really enjoyable. Its 1hr 20 min runtime went by quickly and did not put my ass to sleep. Just go watch the damn thing already especially if you're searching out cult films.



Die Die Delta Pi (2013) Movie Review

by Phillip Wilcox "Our Movie Demon"



Poster art remvisioned by Anthony Piceno

7 6

No matter what I may think of a movie afterwards, it's always a real treat getting introduced to films and filmmakers I have never seen or heard of before. I wasn't quite familiar with director Sean Donohue, but after seeing this flick, I became very familiar! The movie starts out in the 80's when someone is picking off college students one by one. But when a sorority initiation goes horribly awry, decades later at the same college and same sorority, someone recommences the killings once again.

As low budget as this movie was, it really did surprise me on several levels! First, let's talk about how big the cast was - There were a lot of characters in this movie, which was great especially when you need a big body count in a slasher movie. The production value was astounding! Locations, costumes, the dialogue (I mean don't get me wrong, some of it was on the cheesy side, but that's to be expected). The crew did a lot to make the 80's look like the 80's, with props and clothing, the look of the film, and as I mentioned, the dialogue! What a throwback! The make up effects and kills were really impressive! Major kudos to the special effects artist Marcus Koch on his work in this movie! The cast had a natural chemistry which was really cool to see. Gore and T & A. You want it, you got it. There's plenty of it in this movie! With a running time of under an hour and a half, and a budget of less than 10k, Sean Donohue, along with the cast and crew, all show that Die Die Delta Pi has a lot to offer up when it comes to a slasher movie!

WTF! (2017)
Release date – August 1st, 2017 on iTunes, Amazon, Google Play, Vimeo, Xbox, Steam, Vudu, YouTube and DVD. No blu-ray announcement at this time.
Distributor - Midnight Releasing (midnightreleasing.com)

Slasher films are a staple of the horror genre. This includes what people call the tent pole films like Halloween and Friday the 13th, however it also includes those films that predated them such as Black Christmas and various Italian giallos that talents like Mario Bava and Sergio Martino directed. But their heyday was during the 1980's when everyone including Hollywood elites like Harvey Weinstein to groups of college coeds with camera in hand produced them. And in some cases they were well received or, in time, became cult classics. But many were and still are nothing more than rubbish, plain and simple.

Now with the digital format, anyone with the proper equipment can make what they call a film. And in some cases, such as with Quentin Tarantino, folks have bemoaned this phenomenon. One can just go to the horror section of Netflix and see dozens upon dozens of such films that no one has ever heard of and in many cases would be smart to avoid. But this is not always the case.

I'm a huge supporter of the digital format since it immediately removes the most expensive cost for filmmakers – the film stock. Now with digital, audiences have been able to get some splendid movies that in many cases would not have been able to be funded. Just within the last few years such hidden horror gems as Come Back To Me, Goddess of Love, and Sunchoke gave me goosebumps and have generally been well received by critics as well. So for every dozen or so low budget eyesores, a diamond in the rough appears.



The new film WTF! from Midnight Releasing is a surprisingly effective and fun rollercoaster of a slasher film. Having received the screener of the movie, I was a bit hesitant to spend the 81 minute runtime watching it. Peter Herro, the director ... I asked myself, who's he? And the stars? Andrea Hunt? Callie Ott? And the rest? But when a fellow reviewer I respect said the film was absolutely solid, I decided to give it a go. And honestly, I have to say I am so very happy that I did.

In short, the story is simple: a group of seven college seniors head out to the remote California manor of one of their uncles to spend spring break. Certainly cheaper than flying to Cabo, they still have the same opportunities to copulate, partake in recreational drug use, and play video games. In other words, do what college students do to burn off steam. But unbeknownst to them, there is a danger that awaits. And the recent disappearance of the owner of the villa doesn't bode well either.



The film follows the standard slasher beats as if marking off checkboxes on a survey. Remote location? Check. No phones? Check. Harbinger? Check. Hot girls nude? Check. The essential sex scene? Check. Solid practical effects. Check? Effective kills? Check. Body count? Check. Split up into groups? Check. Final girl? Check. But what it doesn't lack with formula, it sure makes up with originality and acting.

Our unknowns playing the seven leads are absolutely solid in their acting. Each of them understood this low budget film was more than just income to pay the rent. They saw it as an opportunity to fill their resume with something they can be proud of. Working with a solid script by Adam Buchalter and direction by first time director Peter Herro, the dialogue is key to the film's early success.

Realism is the main concern with low budget films in general, and with horror films it usually devolves into comedy. Here we have a film that keeps it real as best as a slasher can. Whether it is the emoting by the performers of fear or desire, or discussing how to perform a kill move in the video game they play for leisure, the actors on screen stay in character throughout and the movie never transitions to farce.

One actress, Sarah Agor, who plays Lisa, the mean yet pragmatic girl, actually participated in the short lived VH1 reality television series Scream Queens, where actresses competed for a role in the Saw film series. Though she didn't

win, she obviously is a fan of horror movies and was well studied for this film. The lead girl Rachel, played by Callie Ott (a Kate Mara look-a-like), is written in a curious way that gives her an atypical unlikability that makes her feel unsympathetic at times. At first, as a viewer, I wasn't quite sure if this was intentional or a misstep in the screenplay, but as the film evolves we find out that it is a deliberate choice. The role of the sexy mean girl that's so generic to these types of films is a character named Bonnie, played by the drop dead gorgeous Andrea Hunt. With some novelty and a bit of innovation, even if she is stunning to look at and would seem to be the girl that would thumb her nose at everyone, the character is played with sensitivity, kindness, and loyalty that breaks the mold of the horror caricature and allows us to relate to her more so than anyone else, even if she may travel in different circles than us.

The films runtime states 81 minutes, and the first 40 minutes of that we follow our characters from an early hot tub party where they discuss what to do for spring break to their travels to their ultimate destination, the villa. When they arrive, the regular shenanigans occur. Skinning dipping in the pool, excessive bong use, and their concoction of the best kill move in the latest Xbox fight game.

Character development in these movies usually isn't important, but as a viewer I always appreciate it. And here, with its small cast, we do get to meet our main protagonists quite a bit. Whether they may at times seem immature or even silly, they are possibly the most realistic characters I've seen in a slasher film since Wes Craven's 1996 Scream. And none of them, even if they may be irritating at times, are people I disliked. I can be forgiving of folks a bit more than most, but here I feel as if my opinion of them is fair. And as a result, I could immerse myself in their world with ease.

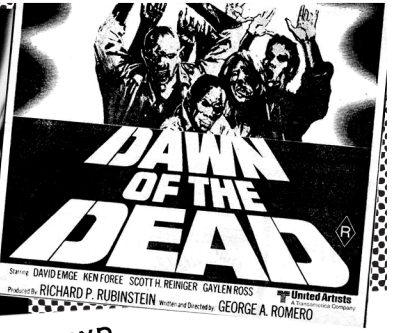
When the unseen killer does begin their bloodshed, the film really moves into high gear. Rather than this new trend in horror films of turning our leads into heroes, our protagonists are full of disarray, and therefore appear more real in my opinion. Fear, desperation, survival, and pragmatism all work side by side for each without one taking precedent. And when they find their vehicles disabled, a debate on whether to hike out of their jam is quickly thwarted when one of them is hampered by a very harsh foot injury.

The script adds a mighty surprise that the more astute viewer may have figured out if they were looking for it. As a result, the film is perfect for a second viewing since the various clues and oddities in the actions of characters are now thoroughly understood. When the movie begins to present this twist, I was still fully unaware of it until the very last beat.

Near the end, as the handful of survivors are reprimanding each other for the lack of haste in decision making, everything was suddenly dropped on my lap. I was honestly blown away by the remarkably well done if not necessarily original twist. No matter what one would feel about the prior part of the film, this alone makes this the top slasher movie of 2017 for me so far. And it will be very hard to top. The film is most certainly a high recommend by me and reaches audiences on VOD and DVD everywhere on August 1st, 2017.





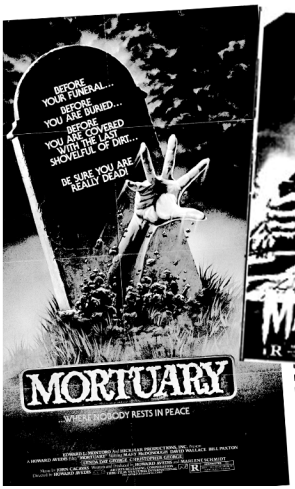


below:
Seemingly, the only photo of my hometown theater available, Circa 1983. Possession ('81) was in Theater 2, which showed mostly 2nd or 3rd run horror films. For some reason, I MISSED IT and never saw it until this year!

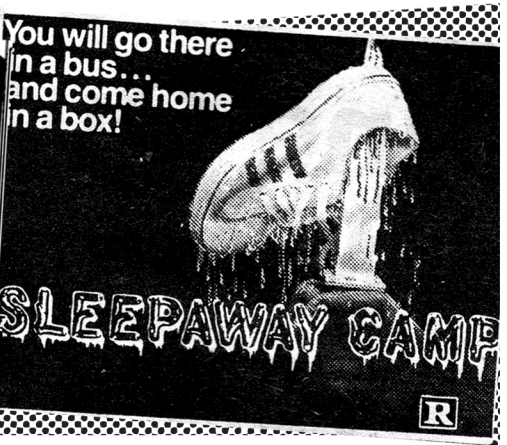


Horror Film theater memories

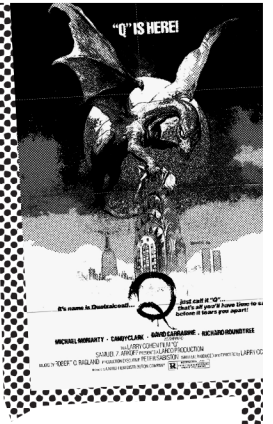
'82 thru '85







By Dave K/A Fiend On Film



I have to say that while the city that I grew up in, Linden, NJ, was a dump and a half, it did have it positive points. One, I had a train to NYC a block from my house and two, a movie theater in town where I received my horror film education (also a block from my house). Growing up in the 1970's, I was fortunate enough to have a mother who loves going to the movies. From a very young age, she took my sister and I (granted, sometimes dragged) to the Linden Theater on North Wood Ave. I saw pretty much every major film that was released at the time. I loved going and do remember most of it.

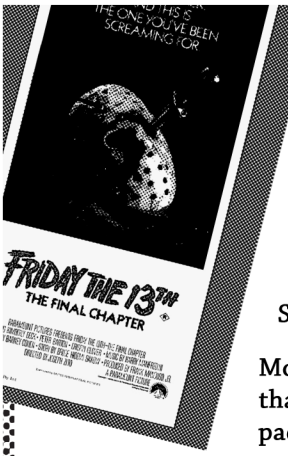
I am not sure when the theater opened up, way before my birth in 1967 but became a Twin theater in 1976, as most were doing at the time. It was old and dumpy, with a big foyer with old film posters glued from floor to ceiling all over it. There was always some kind of arcade game there too. Once the turn of the 1980's, my mother stopped taking us, saying the movies were becoming too sexual (funny story ahead, stay tuned). So I had started going alone or with friends and seeing a lot of crazy stuff.

The thing about the Linden Twin, since it was a small town theater depending one the youth audience to keep it going, didn't "card" anybody. So there was always a bunch of us 14-16 year old kids just walking into the Rated R films all the time. There would be periods of time that a mother would complain to the theater manager that their kid got to see one of these "dirty" horror movies & they would stop kids for a bit, but it never lasted long. I remember the old theater manager, looking like a crusty old plant manager from the 1950's, chomping a cigar, outside checking the lines. He always had a smile on his face when the line was really long 'cause he knew he was going to make some money.

Now the 2nd theater of the twin, must have had a deal to show older 2nd and 3rd run films. I would find out later in life that I actually saw some of these "new" films a couple of years later from their original release. The early 1980's was last era for this type of distribution. As a 14 year old kid, it's just a new film to you.



So being the horror film nerd I was, whatever film was showing that week, you went because they rotated them out pretty quick, every couple of weeks. The video rental age was in it's infancy so, if you missed it...you were out of luck. During the course of this article, I am going to talk about what films I was lucky to see on the big screen (in a stale smelling theater, with sticky floors, etc) and try to tell some funny stories. I am not going to attempt to do these in any order, as my



memory fails me and like I said above, so many of these were screened much later than the original release date. I am using a loose time frame of 1982-85 because I know after that I started going to NYC to see films and the theater expanded (?) to a 4 plex and then a 5 plex. It was the end for crazy horror film then, all LCD mainstream crap after wards.

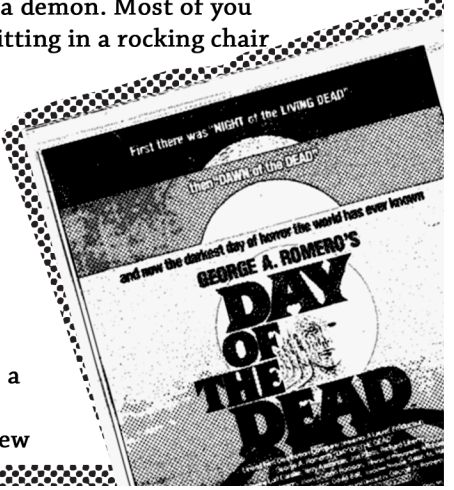
Some classic movie memories (at least to me):

Mortuary (1983) Let's start with one of the best ones that had a lasting effect. This film was very bad and slow paced but one I will always remember. I was with a large group of guys, some I didn't know. One in the group, named "Bobby" (named are not changed to protect the innocent) was with us. During a sex scene in the film (which when seen today, nothing is really happening/can be seen), Bobby tells the guy next to him, "oooo, my tent is rising". The guy jumps up screaming and flies over the seating row in front of us. Everyone is like "what happened?" "He is getting a boner next to me!" and like 4 other guys jump up and just run to the other side of the theater.

Nothing else happened that night, but on Monday at school the fallout began. In some of the classrooms, large messages in chalk appeared... "Bobby the Boyscout says: "My Tent is Rising" or "Bobby the Boyscout Pitches Tents". Needless, the next couple of days were rough for that kid.

The moral of the story here is: If you are getting wood in a darkened theater, don't tell anybody.

Mausoleum (1983) I have a soft spot for this "classic" that still hasn't had a proper modern release. It was another Friday night at the Twin and another packed house. There is one scene in the film where the main character, played by Bobbie Bresse, has turned into a demon. Most of you have at least seen photos of this. She is sitting in a rocking chair and it is very quiet, as the theater was. The husband in the film slowly opens the door and sees the "demon"/wife and is aghast. Just then, this drunk guy stands up in the theater and yells, "GET.....A.....DIVORCE!!" People just went nuts, it was so perfectly timed and funny. Gawd, I still love that movie.



Q: The Winged Serpent (1982) This one is a classic because it actually involves my mother. I went to see Q with a friend I grew

up. For some bizarre reason (maybe because the trailers made you think it was a "monster movie"), my mother took my younger cousin to it and it just happened to be the same showing. Of course, my friend and I sat in the back and they were up in front. About 15 minutes in, there is a scene of a woman sunbathing on a rooftop. The entire big screen is boobs. The next thing you hear is my mother's voice, "OH MY GOD!" followed by my mother getting up and dragging my younger cousin out of the theater by the arm. My friend and I were dying it was so funny. A couple of decades later, I was relaying this story to somebody and my cousin was like, "You know, I never did see the rest of that movie"...

Sleepaway Camp (1983) This film is well known, so if you are reading this and need a spoiler alert...like really?? I do know our theater had this opening weekend because it was late Nov 1983 and it was freezing outside. The film is pretty important in horror due to the ending, especially for us youngsters who could have never seen that coming. Anyway, a friend of mine was trying to impress this girl and she came with us to see Sleepaway Camp. I don't think she was into horror films really but she was OK during the film. Then the end came and BAM! Hit us all like a ton of bricks to the face.

Afterwards, we all walked to one of the local pizzerias, Venice Pizza, to eat food. The crazy thing was it was a bit of a walk, we are all laughing and this girl didn't say a word. Just faced forward, very quiet. We all sit down at the place and she was like very quietly, "she had.....a dick." and started repeating that over and over. Obviously, she had some "issues". To be fair, we were all like "WOW" at the ending of this one, especially since were one of the first to see it.

Those were times I could remember. I saw a ton of films during this time period like Psycho 2, Parasite (in 3D or course), Bloodtide, City of The Walking Dead, Silent Night, Deadly Night (we were lucky to see it as it was pulled quickly from screens due to "moral outrage", Halloween 3 (still my favorite), C.H.U.D., The Mutilator, Phenomena, The Stuff, Return of The Living Dead, etc...

The Linden Twin famously in the area had midnight shows, beginning with the classic The Rocky Horror Picture Show, which I first saw on it's 5th year anniversary. The midnight show in Linden was well know all around for it's live participation during screenings. It was wild to see. In the 2nd theater, they showed many cult and horror films. As they couldn't show Day of the Dead during normal hours, when first released in 1985, it when to the midnight show. I also caught Dawn of the Dead and Friday the 13th Part 4 too.

I saw quite a few other films of this era in the theater, just not at the Twin. It would be great to say I saw Lifeforce and Fright Night there, but they were at other theaters. I think the last exploitation/cult/horror I saw was Bolero, obviously 2nd run in 1985. Now I will admit, it was a "tent rising" film....

Soon after, I was renting more films at home, seeing movies in NYC and was at the Linden Twin, less and less. It was literally my 2nd home for years. It's funny now how I think going out to the movies is so passe but it's definitely not the same anymore, a bygone era. It's OK though, I have the memories and have a large film collection sitting home now. -DK



SANTA CLAUS (1959)

Directed by Rene Cardona

film thoughts by Mando Ayala

Santa Claus is the wildest Christmas movie ever to be filmed. Santa Claus tells the story of the endless battles with the Devil. The story begins with Santa Claus getting ready for Christmas, while the Devil is on earth trying to the kids bad. All through the film the Devil tries to sabotage Sants Claus in delivering his toys to the children. Funny thing about this movie, Sants Claus has Merlin the Wizard to help him with magic sleeping powder and a flower that makes him disappear. He also has a helper named Vulcan who is his key maker, to make a key to open all the doors in the world.

Other main characters are Lupita, the poor little Mexican girl who is getting tempted by the Devil to be bad. You also have Billy, who wants Santa to reuntite him with his parents for Christmas. Plus you have three unknown boys who are trying to capture Santa and steal his toys. Director Rene Cardona sprinkles his own folklore about Santa with craziness. Example. Santa does not live in the North Pole, he lives in a castle in the clouds and he has wind-up toy reindeers to deliver the toys.

Cardona must not have realized how much of an impact this film would make in Mexican culture at that time. By bringing the American version of Santa Claus to the Mexican culture, he changed Christmas in Mexico forever. I give this movie a 9/10 for its take of the Santa Claus Folklore. Make this part of your Christmas viewing tradition.

[95 minutes. PG. Director: Daniel Mann]

"You made me hate myself!" Willard Stiles (Bruce Davison) exclaims to his oily sleazebag boss, Al Martin (Ernest Borgnine) near the end of Willard. It's a great scene that is the culmination of every wrong and injustice the 27-year-old has shouldered, but also underlines the fact that Willard himself is a character whose own passivity and lack of self-confidence has, in a way, caused much of his misfortune.

There are other things, however: a deceased father (Martin's former business partner), an overbearing and needy mother (Elsa Lanchester), and a collection of local grotesques, from the nosy beauty-parlor owner to the duplicitous mortician. Willard is surrounded – sometimes literally – by people looking to suck him dry and drive him to the brink of insanity, to the point where he retreats into his shell when a too-good-to-be-true temp worker (Sondra Locke) offers affection. This is sadly understandable, as Willard has grown accustomed to outwardly benevolent people masking ulterior motives. That Willard is "celebrating" his 27th birthday at the beginning of the film is even more telling, as his short stature and boyish good looks make him appear barely pubescent. The fact that he is chained to his job and obligations to his mother adds an Oedipal undertone to the proceedings (to that end, traces of Psycho also infiltrate the narrative).

When tasked with exterminating some rats wandering the grounds of his mother's Gothic mansion (think Sunset Boulevard), he becomes smitten by their companionship. The more he bonds with the rats, the more he sees potential in what they can do for him – namely, getting vengeance on those who have beaten him down. If there's an arc to Willard's pitiable nature, it's in the way he finally views his rat army as a means to an end, not unlike the human leeches looking to get a piece of him. With the exception of dedicated companion Socrates (a white rat) and the mischievous and destructive Ben (a fat brown rat), the other rodents are anonymous drones, living only to serve.

One of Willard's most striking aspects is its production design: from the aforementioned mansion, to the depressing factory where Willard works, to the costumes and the vehicles, the sensibility is more



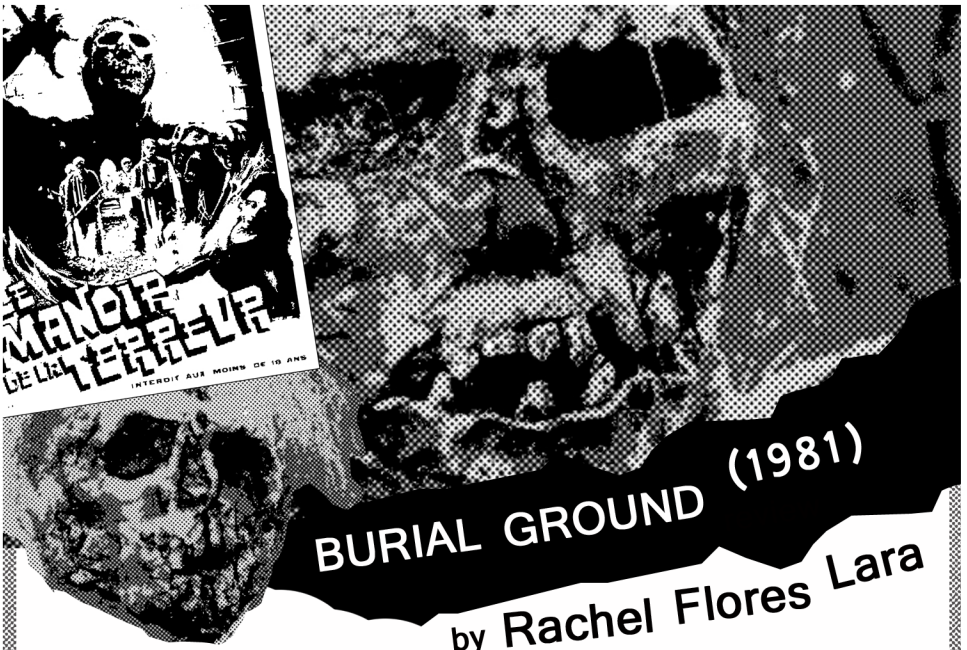
1950s than early 1970s. Even the font for the opening credits feels derivative of a TV show from a bygone era. Perhaps the filmmakers, looking to embrace their unique premise, decided to insulate the effort with a deliberate B-movie feel. Whatever the case may be, it pays of beautifully.

The cast is also stellar. Davison (who played another socially awkward character in Rob Zombie's The Lords of Salem) is integral to the film's odd, suburbia-gone-absurd tone, and it's a testament to his skill that Willard's unappealing personality is balanced by how relatable his struggles are. Locke (resembling a young Patty Hearst) provides some necessary light as the temp who is all too aware of her precarious position on the food chain. Lanchester is properly pathetic as Willard's needy mother, and successfully knocks his self-esteem down further with her comparisons to his deceased father. Like all great villains, Borgnine never devolves into caricature; he uses his imposing physical frame to invoke a bullying presence, but his ultimate fate captures the vulnerability and fear of his character.

With its anachronistic look and collection of misfit characters, Willard can be viewed as a spiritual precursor to the cinematic sensibilities of John Waters and Tim Burton. In 2003, writer-director Glen Morgan took his own stab at the material, creating a unique remake starring the always-offbeat Crispin Glover. Now that the original is available in an official (and great-looking) version, there's no excuse not to check out this strange, wonderful, and all too human film.

Jonny Numb's Rating: 4 out of 5 stars





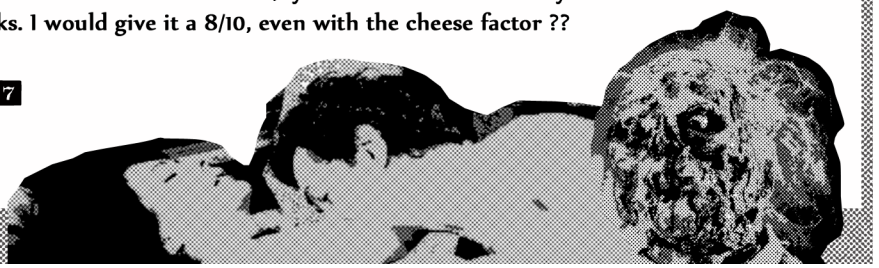
BURIAL GROUND (1981)

by Rachel Flores Lara

I saw this movie when I was a kid. I found it at a PopInGo movie rental place and was so fascinated by the cover on the VHS that I begged my dad to rent it for me. Of course he did, and of course I loved it! Zombie flicks have been my thing since as far back as I can remember so I was excited to check this out at the time. And it further cemented my love for horror. Fast forward to now and I still love the hell out of this movie!

Burial Ground (1981), aka Nights of Terror, is an Italian horror flick by Andrea Bianchi. A group of people who take a trip out to a mansion to meet Professor Ayres, who has made a little bit of a discovery, but is consumed by it.....literally. He has managed to bring the dead back to life so now of course these people are unknowingly walking in a death trap! Oh no! And from here the chaos ensues as we see couples settle in, and start to get, shall we say, a little freaky, haha. But after this the fun begins. The dead begin to make themselves known and they are in for the fight of their lives. This movie has everything! Dead things, creepy atmosphere, sex, boobs, blood, guts, a gross glass thru the eye scene that I still can't watch, and a creepy kid that has a crush on his mommy. What more could you ask for?

If you haven't seen this movie, you should! It's one of my all time favorite zombie flicks. I would give it a 8/10, even with the cheese factor ??



blu-ray review

by Dave K.

aka

a fiend on film



Full disclosure... I am not a big fan of Dario Argento (if you haven't know that already). I like Argento's films, I like the "idea" of Argento, love reading about him and saw all the docs on him. I'm not in love with the man's films as everybody else is. I do "love" Tenebrae and while people think I am mad, I love Sleepless. Now there was one film though I never seen and with the release of Arrow Video's new full 4K restoration of The Bird With The Crystal Plumage (1970), I was able to. I actually didn't even buy this new package for the movie, but will talk about that later.

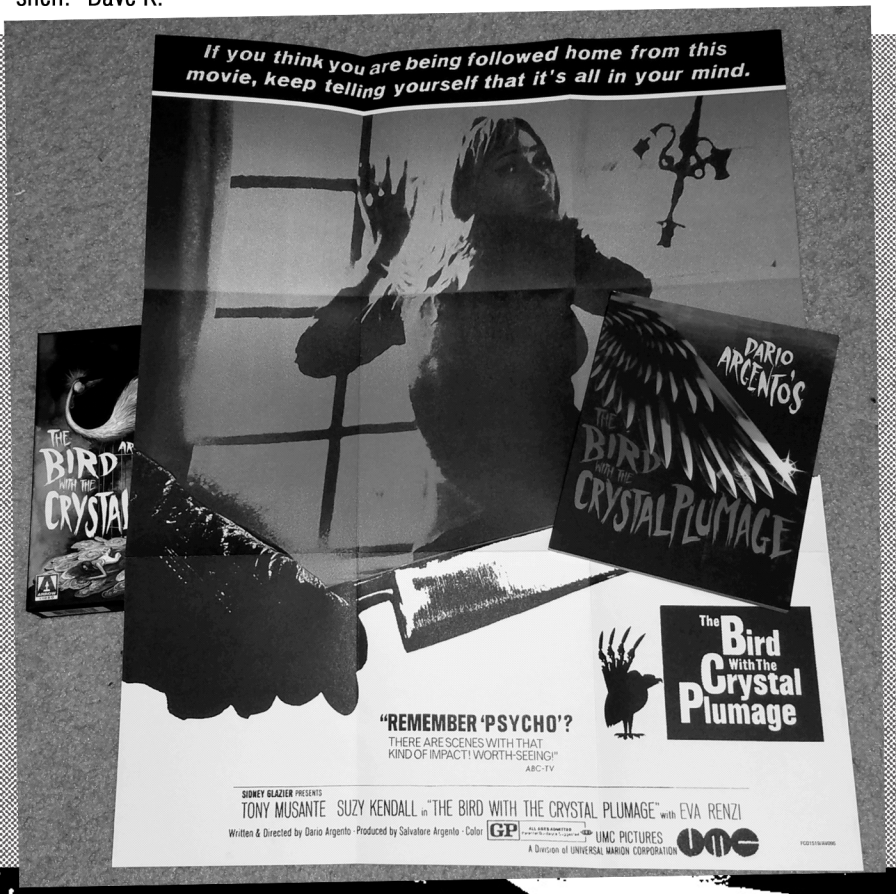
The whole film's premise hinges on the classic first scene of the interrupted "murder", where out main character Sam, unwittingly get trapped behind two glass doors of an open space art gallery. It's a striking image, unable to help but his presence there stops the killing of the female victim. Sadly after this bold opening, the film devolves into the most predictable police procedural, with the detectives hounding Sam as the main suspect of many murders. Trapped in a foreign land (he is American, staying in Italy), he gets obsessed with solving the mystery. Thankfully, between the snore inducing dialogue, some inventive murders of beautiful women occur to wake you up. It's all pretty to look at though.

As for the rest of the package, it's a big win across the board. Yes, I had a main reason for buying this thing. I'm a self admitted Alexandra Heller-Nicholas fanboy and wanted to see/hear this visual essay, The Power Of Perception. It's a 20 minutes piece narrated by Alex with critical scenes of Argento's films up to The Stendal Syndrome and how their themes intercede with one another. I am always up for a good film studies presentation but I will confess, I was a tad disappointed that it wasn't intercut with video of Alex sitting in an over stuffed leather chair and darkened room delivering the knowledge. It's a great piece and I have a better understanding of things now. There is also a visually 60 page booklet with some long pieces by Matthew Griffin and others. 6 very nice reproductions of lobby cards and folded poster of the film round out the set. This is all housed in a hard card stock sleeve, perfect for display. S S

The Bluray looks nice but gawd dang it, it has that fuzzy look that too many Blurays get after brightening the older films. It's hard to explain as I don't hear too many complain

bout this but in like the day/bright scenes, the image looks organic, the film grain seems too blown out. My problem I'm sure, other than that, looks nice.

So if you are an Argento fan looking to replace those old editions of TBWTCP, this Arrow release is really worth the money. It will keep you busy for a good bit for sure. For me though, it's just going to make me look film smart with it sitting up on the shelf. -Dave K.





A look at Cultographies: Ms. 45 (2017) by Alexandra Heller-Nicholas

book review by Dave K. a.k.a. A Fiend On Film

★★★★★

I “met” Alexandra through her writing a couple of year back when I read one of her previous books, Rape Revenge Films: A Critical Study. To me, just that title alone is a home run but when I was about half way through I knew I was reading words from my “new” favorite film writer. While the book has that scholarly air about it, Alexandra shows she is a down to earth film fan first and writes so that dumb shulbs like me can understand. I found out about a couple of films she wrote about in a positive fashion and picked them up.

I later learned from her at the time, that she was working on two future books, both single film specific. One was about Dario Argento's Suspiria (1977) and the next, the one I was most interested in, Abel Ferrara's 1981 Classic Ms. 45. Little that I knew it was going to be a bit for it to be released. The countdown began at that moment...

The book arrived in my mailbox and I fast tracked it to the top of the pile. I was first surprised at the small size of the book and then realized it was perfect. Sized like a classic paperback you would find on the racks of seedy magazine shops (like Seven Star News in the city of Linden, New Jersey where I grew up), the subject material fits it like a glove. In a historical fashion, Alexandra breaks down the making/creation of the film, from it's beginnings to the finished product hitting the screens.

She is a researcher who likes details and doesn't skimp on them. While Alexandra doesn't have a direct interview with any of the particulars, there are many referenced quotes from all who were involved with the proceedings. There is a big focus on Zoe Lund, from the acting in Ms. 45, her writings & collaborations with Abel on other productions, such as Bad Lieutenant (1992). Small details do not get unnoticed, it seems for one big scene in the film, Ferrara hired for day work, people hanging out in the Revolutionary Communist Party Bookstore on 18th Street/NYC, as his studios were upstairs. Weird, I was at that place a few times in the 80's, who knew such greatness was up above! There is also words written about the recent “uncut” DVD release by Drafthouse Films. While I knew there were many versions of Ms. 45, I wasn't aware that it was never released in full until 2013. Crazy.

Overall, as with much of her previous work, Alexandra writes for the “common folk” when it comes to film critique. I would say about 15% of the book would be considered psycho babble but the rest is hardcore film criticism and looking into the film's production, the screenings and reactions afterward. Ms. 45, when you look at it at face value, is not an easy film to fully understand and everybody comes away from it differently. Even though I have seen the film a few times over the years, this book illuminated somethings I missed (again, I'm a dumb shulb, don't sue me...). If you are like me and enjoy reading about movies, Cultographies: Ms. 45 is a sure pick-up.

THINGS IN THE BACK OF THE CLOSET

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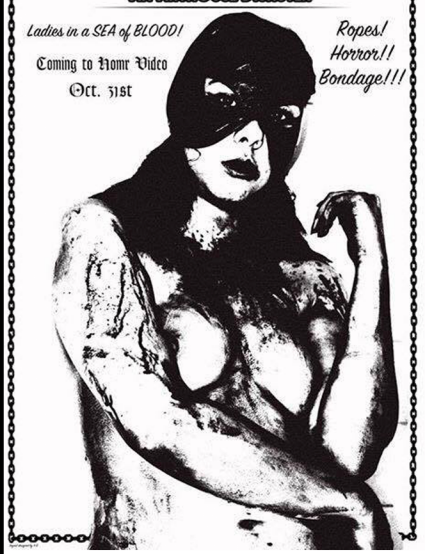
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